

THE  
*HAPPY ASCETICK.*  
OR, THE  
**Best Exercise.**

To which is added,

A

**LETTER**  
TO A

Person of Quality,  
Concerning the Holy LIVES of the  
Primitive Christians.

By ANTHONY HORNECK,  
*Preacher at the SAVOY.*

The Second Edition, Corrected and Enlarged.

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Parry at the Seven-Stars, and T. and J. and Sold by T. and J.  
the Half-Moon in St. Pauls Church-yard. 1685.



Son, go work to day in  
my Vineyard. Math: Ch: 21 v: 28



1960-1961



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TO THE  
Right Reverend Father in God,  
**T H O M A S,**  
Lord Bishop of *Lincoln.*

*My L O R D,*

**T**He Reason , why I dedi-  
cate this Treatise to  
your Lordship , is not  
any Opinion I have of  
the Merit of the Book ; but my  
remembrance of your former Fa-  
vours. I am sensible, how much I  
am obliged to you, and though I  
have often professed so much in pri-  
vate, yet I look'd upon the Duty,  
as imperfect, without I made some  
publick Acknowledgement ; and  
though the Book may not be wor-  
thy of your Patronage , because it

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A

comes

*Epistle Dedicatory.*

comes not attended with new Notions, yet I thought it safer to run the hazard of being judged unlearned, than that of being counted ungrateful.

My Lord, you were the Person, who first took notice of me in the University, and by your Sun-shine, warm'd and cherish'd my Endeavours, and gave Encouragement to those Studies, I am now engaged in, and as under your Shadow, I then advanced, and prosper'd; So now that the Fruit, though of a coarser sort, is come to some maturity, it was but reason, you should have a taste of it. I know not, how pleasant it may be to your curious, and delicate Pallate, but your Piety is such, that you can disrelish nothing that tends to the Exercise of Real Godliness.

A Subject indeed, on which Millions of Books are already written;

*Epistle Dedicatory.*

ten; yet such is the Richness of it, that every day it affords new matter for Contemplation; and though what we write is nothing, but a different Dress of the same Good Angel, yet even those different Garbs, and Habits may help towards the Enlargement of its Splendor and Glory. To plant Goodness in Men is without doubt the indeleble Character of our Office, and to make Souls fall in love with Heaven, the import of that Duty, whereby we hold our Charter; and we have the greater reason to attempt it in an Age, wherein Religion, like the Poets *Echo*, is become an empty sound, and trie how far we may bring that Faith into fashion again, which formerly, when times were better, discovered it self in suitable Works and Actions.

## *Epistle Dedicatory.*

St. Paul's fight with Beasts, one would think, is still entailed upon our Function, and the difference between his, and ours, seems onely this, that his was at *Ephesus*, and ours in the places where we do Officiate; for the Brutal Lusts of Men are now as strong, as ever, and it's hard to say, whether our Task be not the more difficult of the two, since, besides his Preaching, he had the Mantle of *Elijah*, the Power of doing Miracles; and we onely the ordinary Assistances of Gods Spirit. Its true, the World is Christian now, whereas it was Heathen in his time; but I cannot tell whether Christianity, mingled with Paganism in Carriage and Conversation, be not a fiercer Devil to drive out, than meer Heathenism, and Black Infidelity without any White to checker it.

How-

### *Epistle Dedicatory.*

However we have reason to rely upon his Help , who hath promised to be with us to the Worlds end ; and we find by happy Experience , that our Labours are not altogether unsuccessful , where we aim at Gods Glory more than our own Interest .

We are happy in this Church, that we have so many Prelates who are bent upon reviving the strictness of the Primitive Church, excellent Patterns for us the inferiour Clergy to imitate , and being thus encouraged by our Generals , we must be inexcusable , if having such Monitors , we prove careless of our Duty. To reduce Christianity in Men to its Primitive Rule, is the drift of this Discourse ; and as your Lordships Zeal for such harmless Enterprizes cannot be unknown to any , that have had the Honour to converse with you ; so

Aa 3 what-

*Epistle Dedicatory.*

whatever defects may occur in the Book it self, the Scope and Intent being great, I flatter my self, that though I fall short of the Mark I aim at, yet for the Designs sake, your Lordship will generously pardon all the Faults, and Mistakes of,

My L O R D,

Your Lordships

Much Obliged, and very

Humble Servant,

*Anthony Horneck.*

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## THE P R E F A C E.

*The use of new Books, especially upon Subjects of this Nature, I apprehend to be no other than this, That the newness of them is a temptation to Men to read them, who many times will lay aside an Old one, though much better, to peruse a New, and by the Novelty of the Dress, be brought into a good opinion of a Doctrine, which before, while lying in Moth-eaten Leaves, was insipid and nauseous to their Spiritual Appetite; so that we are forced to make advantage of their Temper, and continue Writing, in hopes, that by a new Book we may catch them into seriousness.*

*All I have to say concerning this Treatise, is, That it is intended to call Men away from the Shadow, to the Substance of Religion, from a Form, to the Power of Godliness, and from a notional to a practical Belief of the Gospel; and though Exercise in an Age so much given to Idleness may possibly sound ill, and some Men, that never understood, that Religion required much Labour, will be apt to cry, What will this Babler say? yet we are*

## The Preface.

*not to be laught out of our Christianity by the talk of Men that have no mind to besaved, nor is Religion therefore the less painful, because so many thousands turn it into Formality.*

*The Judge of Quick and Dead will have another Rule to go by, and it is not the Fancies of Men shall guide him in passing Sentence in the great day of Retribution. The World will find, that Heaven takes other Measures, than they flatter themselves withal, and it will not serve turn in that day to say, that they thought, things would not have been so bad, when in this Life, they might have believed the Gospel, and lived for ever. I know not how the Gospel can be plainer than it is, and when it bids none expect Salvation, but those that do the will of their Father, which is in Heaven. It must not be Reason, but Stupidity and Sottishness, than can pretend to ignorance, and as much as this shakes the Foundation of some Mens Faith, it is notwithstanding an everlasting Truth, and when Heaven and Earth shall wax old, as a Garment, this will be found unalterable. The Cost God has been at to make us his, lays invincible Obligations upon us to work the Work of him that sent us hither, and when he hath bought and purchased us at so dear a Rate, as his own Blood, either that report is fabulous, or the Mercy challenges the strictest Obedience,*

## The Preface.

ence. As we are not to appoint our selves our station and condition in the World, so neither are we to do our own Will. We are Servants of God, not onely naturally, and born so, but bought with a Price, and therefore have nothing to do with disposing of our selves, but are entirely at his Devotion, and Will, who bought us for that purpose. Except we do so, we are Rebels, and slight the vast Love, that descended and stooped to make us happy, and we mistake the nature of our Being, and the end of the Gospel, if we think we may do, what we have a mind to.

Nor doth this make us Slaves, but perfect Freemen, and we are never so much at liberty, than when we cheerfully go on from one Virtue to another. The Truth certainly makes us Free, and the Soul doth but lie shackled and a Prisoner till its Wings serve her to mount up by Contemplation to the Regions of Glory. It is then freest, when like the Bee it can fly from one Flower of Grace unto another, and when it can nimbly run in the way of Gods Commands, it may then be truly said to have thrown away its Chains and Manacles. This made Paul and Silas Free, when Bound, and under Custody, and their joyful Hallelujahs in a Dungeon, proclaimed their Liberty to be equal to that of Angels.

Till

## The Preface.

Till we learn to exercise our selves unto Godliness, we are Slaves, though clad in Purple, and pitiful Vassals, though deck'd and adorned with the richest Oriental Pearls. Godliness must make us Kings, and if ever we inherit the Crown of Glory ; this is it, must set it on our Heads. The Kings Daughter is all Glorious within , and his Eyes behold the Upright. The Furniture God likes, is good Works, and Devotion the Trappings , he delights to look upon. No Jewels so amiable in his Eye as the Graces of a holy Soul, and her Virtues are the onely embroidery he is pleased with. Her Breathihns and Pantings after a Crucified Redeemer, are the fine Linnen, he loves to see her in, and her hunger and thirst after Righteousness, the Silks and glorious Garb, which he opens the Windows of Heaven to behold.

This Vesture, like the Israelites Garments in the Wilderness, never decays, and no wonder, for it is so like the Garb Men wear in Heaven, that all the difference is onely this, That the Cœlestial exceeds this in Perfection; the Ground is the same, but the Gloss of that above is more dazzling, and less subject to spots and infirmities.

When will the dull World learn this Truth ? When will poor unconverted Sinners be convinced of their gross Mistakes ?  
When

## The Preface.

When will they see the Charms that are in Godliness, and fall in love with it? When will they believe our report, and think that we are the best Friends, they have? Can nothing open your Eyes, but Hell? Can nothing move you, but Viols of Wrath? Can nothing prevail with you, but a Consuming Fire? Shall this World delude you? Shall your Flesh beguile you? Shall a few Lusts blind you? Will nothing make you wise, but experience of Gods Indignation? Will you count that Godliness your shame, which the Saints of old did esteem their Glory? Are you afraid of your own Bliss? Are you afraid of the Love of God? Doth Gods willingness to receive you, fright you? Are his embraces such dreadful things, that you shun them? Are his Smiles odious? Do his Courtship strike terror? Are you loath to converse with infinite Beauty? Can the Creature be more lovely than the Creator? Can the Stream be more pleasant than the Fountain? Can sublunary Objects afford any comfort, and is it possible, that he that made those Comforts should not yield far greater Satisfaction? Have you drudged so long in the Devils Service, and are not you weary yet? Have you minded your Bodies so long, and do not you think it time yet to prevent the ruine of your Souls? O Jerusalem! wilt not thou be clean?

When

## The Preface.

*When shall it once be? When shall the Ark  
be set up? When shall Dagon Fall?  
When shall the Spices flow? When shall the  
Fig-tree blossom? When shall the Vine put  
forth her tender Grapes?* Wisdom hath  
builded her House, she hath hewn out her  
seven Pillars, she hath killed her Beasts, she  
hath mingled her Wine, she hath also fur-  
nished her Table, she hath sent forth her  
Maidens, she cryeth upon the highest places  
of the City, whoso is simple let him turn  
in hither; as for him that wants under-  
standing, she saith to him, Come eat of  
my Bread, and drink of the Wine, which I  
have mingled; forsake the foolish and live,  
and go in the way of Understanding, *Prov.*  
**9. 1---7.**

THE

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The



THE  
**Best Exercise.**

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I TIM 4. 7.

*Exercise thy self rather unto  
Godliness.*



His Chapter is partly *Prophe-tical*, partly *Doctrinal*; partly Foretelling what would come to pass in the last days, partly intimating what work a Man, who looks for another life, hath to do, while he sojourns on this side Heaven. In the *Prophetick* part, he acquaints his Trusty Disciple, the Bishop of *Ephesus*, with the strange degeneracy, and corruption of Religion, that would ensue in after-Ages, when he should be dead and

B

gone;

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gone; how Men under a shew of Christian strictness, would authoritatively prohibit what God had wisely, and like a good and indulgent Father, permitted to his Creatures, under a pretence of doing more than God hath commanded, set up the Kingdom of the Devil; and by crying out against eating Flesh, and Marriage, discover to the World, that they are more in love with their idle Fancies, and Inventions, than the Will of God, blessed for evermore. Whether in this Prophecy he strikes at the *Encratites*, and *Pythagorean* Christians of old, or at the Modern Church of *Rome*, I will not now undertake to determine.

Whoever they be, he aims at, they are not Men, that by way of Mortification with a pious intent to subdue their Lusts, voluntarily abstain from either: for such Spiritual Exercises many good Men, and excellent Servants of God, did always use. That *Daniel*, and his Companions, *St. Matthew*, and *St. James*, abstained altogether from Fish and Flesh, and all things that had life, is asserted by *Josephus*, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, and *St. Austin*; and Ecclesiastical History speaks of *Alcibiades*, *Olympias*, and divers others, that lived altogether upon Herbs, and Fruits

Fruits of the Earth : Some, because they thought it wholsomer ; and others, because they look'd upon it, as a means to promote Religion, and Seriousnes, and Heavenly - mindedness ; which makes St. *Chrysostom* commend those, that could do so. But these Christians, that were thus temperate, neither condemned those, that did eat Flesh, nor prescribed these Rules, as necessary to others ; much less had they any abhorrency from Flesh or Marriage, as things unlawful. Those, the Apostle reproves here, were Men that both commanded such abstinenſe, and declared eating Flesh, and Marrying, sinful, and proceeding from the Devil ; at least look'd upon the abſtinenſe as great, and meritorious.

In the *Doctrinal* part, which begins at the sixth Verse, he considers *Timothy* as a *Christian* and a *Bishop*, and accordingly prescribes to him Canons, and Rules to be obſerv'd by him in that double capacity. The Church in those days was already infested by very *Ravenous Wolves*, Men, whom the Devil ſent into the World to oppose the deſigns of Christianity, and to keep deluded Mortals in Sin, and Errour. These false Prophets, taught by a more Cunning Master, invented various

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Stratagems, and Ways to prevent the new Proselites of Christianity. Sometimes they pretended readiness to teach *gratis*, without Wages, or Salary : Sometimes they would seem to be stricter, than the True Apostles : Sometimes they boasted of their Learning and Wisdom, and sought to render the Wisdom of the Cross contemptible : Sometime they made the World believe, that they knew great Mysteries, Secrets of Divinity, which the True Apostles were ignorant of ; and particularly *Simon Magus* his Disciples would tell very strange Stories of the Origine, and cause of Good and Evil, of the Fight or Battel of Angels, and of the Creation of the World, which the Apostle, Verse 7. calls *Profane, and Old Wives Fables*, and therefore doth charge *Timothy* to slight, and despise them, and mind nobler things, even such, as tend to the advancement of God's Glory, and the Churches Good, and his own Joy and Satisfaction in the Day of our Lord Jesuſ, whereof Spiritual Exercises, and considerable Progresses in the ways of Godliness, are chief, and most desirable, in the words of the Text, *Exercise thy self rather unto Godliness.*

Before

Before I enter upon any particulars of this Exercise, I must endeavour to convince my Reader, that this Exhortation concerns all Christians, and not Ministers onely, all men that live under the sound of the Gospel, and not the Preachers of it altogether: It's true, it is addressed to *Timothy* a Clergy man, but not as a Bishop, but as a Christian; and the Apostle Charges this Duty upon him, not because he was an Evangelist, but because he had embraced the Christian Faith, and been Baptized in the Name of the *Lord Jesus*, and this is evident from hence, because what is here spoken to *Timothy*, is in other places of Scripture, enjoyned Believers and Christians in general, *Phil.* 4. 8. 2 *Pet.* 1. 5, 6. 2 *Pet.* 3. 11. *Colof.* 3. 12, 13, 14, 15, &c. *Ephes.* 6. 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, &c. And it would be as good a Plea, That contentedness, and striving against Sin, and loving God, and reading the Holy Scriptures, Meekness, Patience, and a lively Hope, are not Vertues belonging to Laymen, because they are recommended to *Timothy* in these two Epistles, as to fancy, that this Text imports no universal obligation.

And this I take notice of on purpose to prevent an objection, which lazy and sloth-

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ful Christians, are apt to make against such necessary lessons and injunctions. It's true, Ministers are obliged to excel in Goodness, and to be patterns to the Flock, in Word, in Conversation, in Spirit, in Faith and Purity, as St. Paul speaks, v. 12. of this Chapter; But that doth not excuse the Hearers, or private Christians, from pursuing the same end, or pressing towards the same mark, but rather enforces the obligation, because they have such lively motives before their Eyes, which makes the Apostle call to his Disciples, *Phil. 3. 17. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as you have us for an ensample:* So that if this command had been given to *Timothy*, as a Minister of the Gospel, yet the obligation that lies upon all Christians to imitate their Pastors in their Holy lives, and acts of Piety, makes this Exercise universally necessary,

Men are generally so enamoured with Sin, and the World, and the Devil doth so continually buzz the inconveniences of Religion, and the impossibilities of living up to what God commands, into their Ears; That they care not, how absurd the excuse is, they invent, to get their necks out of Christ's Yea<sup>k</sup>; so vigorously

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gorously do they fight against their own Happiness, and so desperately do they thrust away Salvation from them, and let the shift, or apology they have for their neglect, be never so bad or silly, a meer Apron of Fig-leaves, yet that shall serve, rather, than they will go without one. They are sensible that the injunctions of the Gospel are given to rational Creatures, not to Foxes of the Field, nor to Fishes of the Sea, nor to Fowls of the Air; and because they would live undisturb'd in their Lusts, unmolested in their Sensualities, and easie in their Pleasures; they flatter themselves, that these stricter Laws, concern onely the Ministry, or Men in Black, that have little else to do, but to mind their Books, and their Souls. Indeed if we were the onely Men that had Souls to be saved, the argument would hold good; if Heaven were design'd for none but Priests, much might be said for this pretence: but when in that point you are as much concern'd as we; and the Worm that dies not, is described by the Holy Ghost, on purpose, to fright you as well as us; Look to it, for there is but one Gospel, whereby both Priest and People shall be judged.

B 4

Oh

*The Best Exercise.*

Oh Sirs, consider, whether these execuses will be accepted in the last day? If Holiness of Life be a Ministers Duty one-  
ly, what makes you repent on your Death-  
beds, that you have not minded it more?  
What makes you send for us to cloath  
you with the Garments of Righteousness,  
when your Souls are going to another  
World? What makes the Apostles write  
so many Epistles to their Hearers and Di-  
sciples? And what makes them fill their  
Epistles, with so many pathetical exhorta-  
tions to this seriousness? Nay, What  
do you come to Church for? Is it onely  
to hear us talk? Is it onely to divert your  
selves? Is it onely to pass away the time?  
Is it not to learn your Work? Is it not to  
know the Task, God requires at your  
hands? Is it not to be acquainted with the  
Will of God, that you may do it? And if  
so, you bear witness against your selves,  
you condemn your selves, you acknow-  
ledge this Exercise is your Duty, as much  
as ours. There is never a sinner of you  
all, that shall dare to plead in the great day  
of account, that you were not persons  
concern'd in this work, that it was out  
of your Element, and beyond your  
Sphere; God will bear witness, and the  
Angels will bear witness, and the Ministers  
of

of the Gospel will bear witness, and your own Consciences will bear witness, nay, the Devils themselves will bear witness, that you were told, assur'd, and convinc'd, that it was to you, that the message of Grace and Pardon was sent, as well as to us ; and that you lay under the same obligation to fulfil the Conditions, upon which that Pardon is offer'd, that we do.

Who of you desires not to be saved ? Hath any of you a mind to be damn'd ? Dares any of you refuse the everlasting Mercy of God ? Do not you all declare, that you would fain inherit the Kingdom, which fades not away ? But shew us one Scripture, one place in the Bible, one tittle in the word of God , that favours your Plea, or allows you a different way to Eternal Happiness, than is appointed to the Preachers of the Gospel ; and if God be resolv'd, that all that enter into his joy, shall improve their Talents, work hard, and walk in the same way ; all these pretences must needs vanish into smoak, and can be nothing else but snares of the Devil, and Lime-twigs of the Prince of the Air, to catch your Souls into ruine, and to deprive them of that Blessing, which must advance them above

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above the profaner Herd, make them equal to Angels; and what is more, partakers of the Divine Nature.

So then, what the Apostle saith here to *Timothy*, he saith unto all, *Exercise thy self unto Godliness*: and I must intreat you to look upon this Exhortation, as spoken to every one of you in particular, and to reflect on the importance of it, with as much seriousness, as if St. *Paul* did at this time, from the mansions of Glory, by a new Commission from Almighty God, call you every one by your Names, Thou *Thomas, John, Daniel, Peter, Ann, Elizabeth, Mary, &c.* *Exercise thy self unto Godliness*. Fancy you see the Glorious Apostle standing in the Clouds of Heaven, and bespeaking you from the mouth of him, who is resolved, that not every one that saith to him, *Lord, Lord*, but those that do his Will, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Fancy you hear him cry in your Ears, *Ob mortal men, whom God so loved, that he gave his onely begotten Son, to the end, that all that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life, whom the Son of God is willing to deliver from Sin, and Slavery, and the bondage of the Devil, for whom he suffered Agonies, Wounds, Torments, Shame,*

*Re-*

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Reproaches, and an ignominious Death,<sup>and</sup> purchase a Heaven, and an endless Glory for you! every Wound of his calls for this Exercise; every Tear he shed, is to melt you into a holy willingness to it; every Word he spake, is an Exhortation to it; His Love challenges it; His Labours and the Pain he took for you require it; you cannot own him for your Redeemer without it; he cannot save you from your Sins without it: if his Love be not worth this Exercise, it is worth nothing. O deluded Sinners! Will you slight this Mercy? Will you trample on the Blood of Jesus? undervalue his agonies, or fancy, they deserve no such Exercise? O let not this Love be your ruined let not this Mercy be your Damnation; let not this Kindness be the Jewel, that must feed your Fire; let not this Condescension be a Witness against you: you know not what you refuse, when you refuse this Exercise. As you love your selves, as you tender your eternal welfare, as you would not be counted haters of God, despisers of his Love, Apostates from all Sense of Gratitude; As you look for favour in the last day, as you hope to see the Face of God in Glory, as you desire to finde Mercy of the Lamb, that takes away the Sins of the World: By all that's holy and serious, by the Tears of God's

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God's Ministers, and what is dearer to you, your own Interest; and by all the Promises and Threatnings of the Gospel, I entreat you, Exercise your selves unto Godliness. Could you but look into this Heaven, and behold the vast Armies of Blessed Souls in this Celestial Quire, here you would finde none, but such as did formerly, when on Earth, apply themselves to this Spiritual Exercise; This is the place of Recompence: He that was a stranger to these Exercises on Earth, can expect no Reward in these Regions of Happiness: Here Godliness appears in it's greatest Beauty, and Glory. As you expect the White Garment, the Royal Garb, the Saints of this place do wear; as you hope for Abraham's Bosom, where now the once Godly Lazarus lies, O delay not, negleit not to Exercise your selves unto Godliness: And what these Exercises are, is the next thing I am to Treat of.

These Exercises are either Ordinary, or Extraordinary; either daily, or to be used but now and then; either constant, or such, as may for some time be intermitted, till necessity, and the exigency of our Spiritual Condition shall command a Reiteration. I begin with the daily

daily, constant, and ordinary ; and they are these following :

### I. *Exercise.*

*Praying always.* An Exercise enjoyn'd by him, who came to call Sinners to *repentance*, Luke 18. 3. 1 Thes. 5. 17. Ephes. 6. 18. By Praying always, I mean, to bring our selves to that habit of Praying, to that disposition and temper, and readiness to Pray, as shall put us upon Praying, wherever we are, whatever company we are in, and whatever we are doing, though not with our Lips, yet in our Minds and Understandings; An Exercise of that consequence, that this Praying Fame is one of the chiefest Pillars, and Supporters of a Christian Life : and this the Religious persons of *Ægypt* in *Cassi-Vid. Cassian's time did understand so well, that* <sup>an. lib. 2.</sup> *Instit. c. 10.* <sup>& August.</sup> they made exceeding short Prayers, but <sup>Epiſt. ad Probaṁ.</sup> very frequent ; every quarter of an hour, and oftner sometime, they sent up some Holy Ejaculations to Heaven : and this Art did *Paphnutius* teach *Thais* the Harlot after her Conversion ; and St. *Bernard* reports the same of St. *Malachias*. I have read of others, that while they have been in company of their Neighbours, have in their Minds, offered

no

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no less than One Hundred and three  
\* In Imitation possibly of St. Bartholomew the Apostle, of whom it is reported that he Pray'd a hundred times a day.  
 Prayers unto Almighty God ; \* and accordingly *Macarius* advised the Man that ask'd him how he should Pray, to repeat very frequently such words as these in his Mind, *Have Mercy upon me O Lord, as thou wilt, and think'st most convenient.* In the Lives of the Fathers there is mention made of one *Moses*, that Pray'd Fifty times a day ; of one *Paulus* that Pray'd Three Hundred times, and of a Virgin that did so Seven Hundred times : others have gone farther, and lifted up their hearts to Heaven a Thousand times a day, as St. *Clara*. These Prayers were onely short Ejaculations, used upon all occasions, effects of this Praying Fame ; and whatever they undertook, they began with a Prayer ; and while they were busie in the Works of their Calling, still some Holy Aspirations came from them ; and if they were reading the Bible, at the end of every Verse their Souls breath'd after God, and in few words, beg'd some Blessing at his hand ; to which purpose, St. *Ephrem* gives this excellent Rule, *Whether you work, or are going to lie down; whether you stand still, or are in a Journey; whether you eat, or drink; whether you are going to sleep, or*  
s. Ephrem, c. i. Hom. de orand. Dico.  
*are*

are awaking, take heed you do not forget to Pray; whether you are at Church, or at home, or in the field; whether you feed sheep, or build houses; whether you are at a Feast, or otherwise engaged, still Pray, and Converse with God.

These short Ejaculatory Prayers, are, by \* St. Austin, justly called Arrows, \* *Vid Au-*  
whereby God's Heart is wounded, and *gust. Ep. ad  
Probam.* our hearts are raised into reciprocal love to God. These are the Prayers which

† Tertullian calls, Prayers without a † *Tertul.*  
Train, or retinue of Words. And Isaac *de Orat. c.*  
the Anchorete, in || *Cassian*, pure Offer- *I. Sine ag-*  
ings, Sacrifices with Marrow in them. *mine verbo-*  
These are the Works, or Attempts of our *rum Oratio.*  
Spiritual Bow, as \* *Justinian* phrases *|| Cassian*  
them, Darts, and Arrows, levell'd against *collat. 9. c.*  
the Enemy; Fiery Desires of the heart, \* *Vid. Lau-*  
and the Wishes of Importunate Suppli- *rent. justi-*  
cations, which are shot up to Heaven, *nian. de in-*  
wound a great way off, fly with great *ter confli-*  
swiftness, keep the Enemy from coming *c. 10.*  
too near, and sometimes at one stroke  
enervate his Temptations, when he ap-  
proaches; for seeing the presence of God  
in these Ejaculations, he is struck with hor-  
ror, and departs.

And this Rule I earnestly entreat my Reader to think of, and put in practice.  
Christian

Christian, What difficulty is there in't, before any honest attempt, or enterprise, to say in thy Mind, *Lord establish thou the work of our hands upon us, yea the work of our hands establish thou it; or if it may not tend to thy Glory, keep it from prospering, and let it not succeed according to my desires?* If thy designe be honest, and lawful, Why shouldest thou be loth to recommend thy endeavours to the conduct of Providence? Try it, and thou wilt finde what comfort it will yield in the end. When thou hearest the Clock strike, let thy Mind immediately mount up to Heaven, and say, *Lord, so teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom:* When thou art dressing thy self, *Cloth my soul with salvation, and deck me with white raiments, that the shame of my nakedness may not appear:* When washing thy hands and face, *Bathe my soul in the Blood of Jesus, and wash my heart from all Iniquity:* When walking, *O Lord, cause me to walk in the way of thy Testimonies, and let me not wander from thy Commandments:* When in Company, *O when will that Joyful Day come, that my soul shall be gathered to the innumerable Company of Angels, to the general Assembly, and Church of the First-born, which are*

are written in Heaven, and to the Spirits  
of just Men made perfect. When Wri-  
ting, Lord, put thy Laws in my heart, and  
write them upon my mind. When Read-  
ing, O make me to understand the way of  
thy Precepts, so shall I talk of thy wondrous  
Works. When Rising, O let me awake  
unto Righteousness, and arise from the dead,  
that Christ may give me light. When ly-  
ing down, O cause me to lie down in the  
green pastures of thy Mercy, lead me beside  
the still waters of thy Comforts, and restore  
my Soul. When kindling a Fire, O shed  
abroad thy love in my heart, and raise such  
flames within, as may burn up all my dross,  
and all my filth. When lighting a Can-  
dle, O give me the Spirit of Wisdom and  
Understanding, and enlighten mine Eyes,  
that I may see what the hope of thy calling  
is, and what the riches of thy Grace are.  
When Eating, or Drinking, O let it be  
my Meat, and Drink to do thy Will; feed  
me with the Bread which came down from  
Heaven, and give me to drink of that Wa-  
ter, whereof whoever drinks, shall never  
thirst again. When Riding out, O Thou  
that ridest upon the wings of the Wind, shew  
thyself, conquer my Corruptions, and trample  
all my Sins under thy feet. When taking  
the Air, Come, Holy Spirit, blow upon my

## The Best Exercise.

Garden, that the Spices may flow out ; make my mind calm, serene, and quiet ; breath upon me, and revive me with the light of thy Countenance. When Visiting a sick Neighbour, O do thou make all his Bed in his sickness, and give me Grace to speak a word in season to him, and cause all thy Goodness to pass before him. When beholding Trees, and Plants, and Flowers, Lord, how wonderful are all thy Works ! in Wisdom hast thou made them all, the Earth is full of thy Riches. O make me as a Tree planted by the Rivers of Water, which may bring forth its fruit in due season. When going to speak to a Great Man, Over-awe me with thy presence, Lord, that I may not comply with any Evil, but may fear Thee more than Men. When going by Water, O satisfie my Soul with the Fatness of thy House, and make me to drink of the River of thy Pleasures. When Buying or Selling, Lord, prevail with me to

Vid. Misna keep a Conscience void of offence toward Beracoth. God, and toward Man. When standing c. 4. Sest. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. in thy Shop, How amiable are thy Tabernacles, Lord God of Hosts ! O let me ever love the Habitation of thy House, and the place where thine Honour dwelleth. When Rabbi Nechunia hearing thy Neighbour Curse, or Swear, lies Kana O Lord, lay not this sin to his charge : Father,

ther, forgive him, for he knows not what *peccatus est*  
he doth. When hearing any good of thy *in ingressu suo in Syna-*  
*Friend, or Acquaintance, O let him grow gogam, i-*  
*in Grace, and go on from Virtue to Virtue, temque in*  
*and make him fruitful in every good word, precatio-*  
*and work. When seeing any one, that's *nun bre-**  
*Blind, or Lame, or Dumb, O Lord, make *vem, &c.**  
*these distressed Creatures amends for these Rabban*  
*defects some other way; make the Eye of ait. Camaliet*  
*their Faith the quicker, their inward Man quoque die*  
*stronger, and their Hope more lively, and mo ostode-*  
*visit them more powerfully with thy Salva- diciton, cim benedictiones,*  
When looking upon a Dunghill, &c.

O make me to know my self, and discover *Si quis in-*  
*to me my false deceitful heart, and the odi- sitet asino,*  
*ousness, and loathsomeſs of my sins, that descendat,*  
*I may hate them with a perfect hatred. potest def-*  
When beholding the Sun, O Thou Sun *cendere, a-*  
*of Righteousneſs, rise upon me with healing clem. suam*  
*under thy wings, and warm my Soul with *versus Je-**  
*thy Radiant Beams, that I may love thee *precetur,**  
better than Father and Mother, better &c.

than all that's dear and pleasing to me *Qui sedet*  
here below. When looking upon a House, *in navi aut*  
*O my God, make me in love with that City, aut in ra-*  
*which hath Foundations, whose Builder and *tibus, diri-**  
*Maker is God: O when shall this Earthly *get cor su-**  
*House of my Tabernacle be dissolved, and I *um versus Sanctum**  
*received into that Building of God, the *Sanctorum**  
*House, not made with hands, eternal in tar, &c.*

*The Best Exercise.*

*the Heavens ! When seeing other Men  
laugh at any sin, Lord, let Rivers of Tears  
run down mine eyes, because Men do not  
keep thy Law : O give me tenderness of  
Soul, that I may be concern'd at other Mens  
sins, as well as mine own. When beholding  
any Children, or Infants, O Lord,  
out of the mouths of Babes and Sucklings  
do thou prepare praises unto thy self ; let  
these Children grow up as the Lilies, and  
spread their Branches as the Cedars of Li-  
banon. When going to visit a Friend,  
Lord, make him thy Friend ; and that he  
may be so, incourage, and assist him to do  
whatsoever thou commandest him. When  
reproved by another, Lord, let this reproof  
be as an excellent Oyl to me ; give me Grace  
to take it in good part ; let my Soul thrive  
by it ; let it heal my wounds, and make me  
thankful for this opportunity. When re-  
ceiving any injury, or ill language, Sweet  
Jesu, give me Grace to follow thy example,  
and to tread in thy steps, who being reviled,  
didst not revile again ; and when thou wert  
threatned, suffereddst it, committing thy self  
to him, that judges righteously. When see-  
ing it Snow, Purge me with Hyssop, and  
I shall be clean ; wash me, and I shall be  
whiter than Snow. When seeing it Rain,  
O visit me with the former and latter Rain*

*of thy favour, and make my heart rich with thy Showers, that I may bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. When despised for Righteousness sake, O let me esteem the reproach of Christ greater Riches than all the Treasures of the World. When it Thundereth, O Lord, the Power of thy Thunder who can understand! Let the World take notice of the Voice of God, and the Inhabitants of the Earth learn Righteousness.*

I have been the more prolix in particularizing these Ejaculations of the Mind, and these Aspirations of the Heart, in the various Contingencies, Accidents, Proviciencies, and Actions of our Lives, because I would help the Ignorant, and take away all colour of excuse, and destroy all pretences of impossibility of this Exercise. Use will make it easie: And, Sirs, if ever you would learn to converse with God, or to have your Conversation in Heaven: If ever you would get a Foretaste of the Joys to come: If ever you would make Religion your Busines: If ever you would conquer the Lusts of the Flesh: If ever you would extinguish vain and evil Thoughts: If ever you would arrive to a sound Mind, and that inward Spiritual Worship of God, without which Christ says, None can please him: If ever

## The Best Exercise.

you would learn to conquer Temptations: If ever you would have your Souls become strong, lusty, and vigorous in the Ways of God; This is the way, even this Praying without ceasing. This is the best Antidote against Sin, the best Medicine to cure all Spiritual Diseases: It doth not hinder you in the Works of your Calling, but rather furthers and sanctifies them; nor can it be uneasy to the Mind, except it be to the unwilling Mind;

*Vid. Te-* and it keeps out the Devil better than St. ref. *Vit. c. Teresa's* Holy Water, or St. *Antbony's* Sign <sup>31. & A.</sup> thanas. *Vit.* of the Cross.

*S. Antonii.* I know, what will be pleaded here, That this is to make Religion burthen-some, a Yoak indeed, and at this rate you shall never enjoy your selves. But give me leave to ask you, What kind of Religion would you have? Would you be Religious, and dissolute? Would you be good, and have Elbow-room in Sin? Would you be pious, and be kept within no bounds? Cannot you enjoy your selves, without you may be Licentious? Would you be happy, and suffer no restraint to be laid upon your Sensual Pleasures? If this be a Yoak, there have been those before your time, that have cheerfully drawn in it, and thought themselves

selves most blessed for having the honour of the Employment. It is a yoak, which the Son of God hath taken upon himself, and all the Apostles, whose Memories you celebrate, and whose Actions you admire, have imitated their Great Master in. Would you be his Disciples, and live as you please? Are you proud of being his Followers, and scorn his Laws? Do you glory in his Salvation, and are you loth to follow his Example? Would not you deny your selves in your ease for a Crown of Glory? Would you have all that the World affords, and all that Heaven affords? Would you live easie here, and easie hereafter too? Would you lie in the lap of Sensual Delights here, and from thence drop into the Bosom of Everlasting Mercy? Is it rational to believe, that the Spiritual delights above are purchased by brutish, and beastly ones on Earth? He that will have his fill of this World, must not expect to have his fill of the next. He that will welcome the pleasures of Sin and Lust here, must not think to drink of the Rivers of God's pleasure hereafter; He that means to Rejoyce hereafter, must mourn here; He that means to Laugh in the next Word, must

## The Best Exercise.

weep in this; Son remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things, but now he is comforted, but thou art tormented, saith Abraham to Dives, Luke 16. 25.

### I I. Exercise.

*Every Morning, when we have paid our homage to God, by Prayer and Thanksgiving, to resolve, and solemnly resolve to tye our selves to certain Rules of living that day;*  
*An Exercise recommended to us, Psal. 17. 3, 4. Psal. 76. 11. Psal. 57. 7, 8. Psal. 119, 101, 106.* To this purpose Pliny saith of the Christians in Trajan's time, That they used to oblige themselves, or bind themselves by an Oath in the Morning, before they went about their Business, not to Sin, not to Cheat, not to Lie, not to Steal, not to keep any thing unjustly from their Neighbours: And this Exercise was observed many hundred years before that time by David, Psal. 5. 2.

where our Translation renders it, *In the Morning will I direct my Prayer unto thee,*  
 בְּקָרְךָ אֱלֹךְ  
*and will look up:* but the Original runs  
 וְאַצְפֵּן thus: *In the Morning I do order, or dispose my self to thee, or towards thee, and watch, as a Man from a high Tower watches and observes the motion of the Enemy.* Not,  
 but

but that our Translation reaches *David's* sense well enough, but it doth not so fully express it, as it might have done. He had, in the foregoing words, spoken of his Prayer in the Morning; and behold, what he presently subjoyns to that Duty! When I have done this, I then resolve how to order my Conversation that day, and how I may please God; and consider, how I may best watch against those Corruptions which do most easily beset me. The truth is, Men running abroad abruptly, without any previous consideration of what they mean to do for their Souls that day, must needs continue strangers to that Spiritual Life, our Profession obliges us to; for this makes them rush into Sin, as the Horse rushes into the Battle, having no Bridle to restrain, no Curb to keep them in order, no Solemn Resolutions upon their Souls to check, and govern themselves; whereas, if before I venture upon any worldly busines, or work of my Calling, I do solemnly resolve, in the presence of Almighty God, *This day do I seriously intend thus and thus to behave my self, by the blessing and assistance of Almighty God; I resolve, If a Neighbour, or any other person, should be very Angry, or Insolent with me, to answer*

*The Best Exercise.*

answer him with meekness and gentleness : If I meet with success in my Busines, as soon as I come home, will I enter into my Chamber, and praise the Great Giver of every good thing : If I am tempted to go into Company, and have reason to suspect, they'l draw me into Sin, I'll refuse to go, though they revile, and abuse me for it never so much : or if I go into any Company, I'll speak but little, or will endeavor to divert any vain Discourse to more savory Subjects. If a man speak ill of me, I'll be sure not to speak ill of him again : If I meet with any ill Language, I'll keep my mouth as it were with a Bridle. Testerday I committed such an error, against this fault I'll watch to day, and strive to reform my Inclinations. If my Servants, or my Children, do things undecent, or unlawful, I will certainly reprove them with tenderness and compassion. If I meet with objects of Charity, I'll relieve them according to ability ; or if I meet with none, I'll seek out, and enquire for some to whom I may express my Love, and Christian Compassion : If I am ask'd a Question, which I know not how to Answer readily, without telling a Lie, I am resolv'd either to be silent, or to take time to consider of an Answer, that I may not be surpriz'd into an untruth.

If

If I resolve thus, before I set about any of my Secular Affairs, I set up a kind of *Remembrance Office* in my Soul, and constitute a Monitor in my Conscience, that will put me in mind of my Obligations, and pull me back, when my Sensual Appetite would push me on to Sin.

To make this Exercise more effectual, select two or three of *Christ's Precepts* every Morning, and resolve to live up to them strictly, so long, till you have conquered your selves, and made the Practice of them familiar to you; and when you are arrived to a facility, and love of such Duties, set your selves another task, and make choice of two or three other Lessons, especially of the Greater and Weightier sort, and observe the same method. By Example, I seriously resolve this day to observe three Rules; *To speak evil of no Man*; *to Praise God seven times with David*; *to shun the occasion of such a sin*, suppose Anger, or Hatred to my Neighbour. Thus I will resolve every Morning, before I settle to any Work, till these Duties become easie and pleasing to me; and when my Soul begins to delight in them, I'll then appoint me another task in the Morning, resolve to be cautious of promising, and if

*The Best Exercise.*

if I promise, to keep strictly to my promise ; to deceive no Man, though it were never so much for my profit and interest ; or to have good discourses at my Table : And till I were Master of these Vertues too, I would go on in my Resolutions every Morning ; and if I broke, or acted contrary to them at any time, I would renew them next day with greater vigor and earnestness. This is it partly, which *Solomon* means, *Eccles.* 11. 6. *In the Morning sow thy seed* : and from these pains in the morning, before we go abroad, we may promise our selves an excellent harvest all the day. To this end, it will be necessary to consider, what sins we are most prone, and inclined to, that we may resolve particularly against such, and arm our selves against them. And to this purpose I have read of one *Sylvanus*, that he always began his Work in the morning, with these Holy purposes, *To censure no body that day, but to reflect always on his own sin*, whenever he met with a temptation to judge his brother ; *Not to hate any person for his sin, but to pity him, and to pray for him* : *to think of the day of his death, and not to rejoice at any thing that was evil* ; whence it came to pass, that he arrived to that perfection of Grace,

that

that like another *Abraham*, he became a Father of the Faithful, and able to comfort them, which were in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith himself was comforted of God, to use St. *Paul's* Expression,

*2 Cor. i. 4.*

Where people venture out, without putting on this Armour of God, this Shield of Faith, and this Breast-plate of Righteousness; no wonder if they expose themselves to the Fiery Darts of the Devil, and the insolence of that roaring Lion, which walks about, seeking whom he may devour; such a Soul lies open to his incursions, and having no hedge to fence it, *The Bore out of the Wood doth waste them, and the wild Beast of the Field devours them*, as *David* speaks, *Psal. 80. 13.* Such resolutions in the morning, are a wall about the Soul, and the Devil cannot easily climb it; the sight of it weakens his attempts, and he is afraid of approaching it, as much, as once he was of coming near the Cell of Holy *Sophronius*. These are <sup>Vid. Mosch. Prat. Spir. c. 159.</sup> the Bulwarks, that fright the slaves of Hell, and where they see such Citadels built against their fury, their courage fails them; or where the assail the Fort, it is but with fear and trembling. Such Resolutions shew, that we do not take up

Re-

*The Best Exercise.*

Religion out of custom, but upon serious deliberation, and perswasion, that this is the one thing necessary, and that the fear of God hath our chiefest care, and is the beginning of our wisdom, a temper, without which, God rejects our service, and hides his face from our customary Devotions, and gives them no other welcome, but this, *Who hath required this at your hands?*

Sirs, you purpose in a morning to dispatch such and such of your worldly affairs that day; Why should you not purpose to do something more than ordinary for God, or for your Souls every day? How come your Spiritual concerns to deserve so little care? Why must ye needs be slovenly and careless in this particular? Is not your Soul more than your Trade, and your Eternal welfare, more than a livelyhood on Earth? Why of all things must your Souls, and your God be neglected? *Laban* was more concern'd for his God, than for his Sheep and Oxen; Shall an Idolater mind his Idol more, than you the great God of Heaven, and Earth? You complain you cannot conquer your corruptions; How should you conquer, when you do not strive? How should you strive, if you enter into no

Ho-

Holy purposes, to arm your selves against the sins of the day? Are Corruptions blown away with a breath? Or Lusts that are deeply rooted, expelled with Sighs and Wishes? Did you ever know Cedars fall with the touch of a hand? Or did ever Children with a switch, strike a sturdy Oak out of its place? Will your Sins leave you when you do not think of them? Or will these Foes ever yield, while you make no War against them? Do you think the Devil values your Souls as little as your selves; or do you fancy that strong man will leave his Habitation, except you come against him with Swords and Axes? *Canst thou draw Leviathan with a Hook, or his Tongue with a Cord, which thou lettest down? Canst thou put a Hook into his Nose, or bore his Jaw through with a Thorn? Wilt thou play with him as with a Bird? Or wilt thou bind him for thy Maidens?*

With what faces can you confess your sins at night, when your Consciences tell you, and cannot but fly into your faces, and convince you, that you did do nothing to prevent them; that you left your selves naked, and exposed to the assault of temptations, and would take nothing to preserve you from the infection?

What

*The Best Exercise.*

What do you confess your Sins for, but to be better? And if to be better, how is it possible, you should be so, without you defend and gaurd your Souls, by such Holy purposes the next day? Do you make confession of Sin a business of custom onely? Do you make no more than a formality of it? How shall God forgive you? How shall he pardon you for your transgressions, while you do not study and contrive next day, how you shall be rid of those sins, which the night before, you professed your sorrow for? Do you think God will be put off with shadows, and the Almighty gull'd with counterfeit Devotion? Have you lived so long under the Gospel, and have learn'd Christ no better? Have you conversed with Ministers so long, and are no better Scholars? The Devil himself cannot but smile, to see how ridiculously you go to work, to be good, and to subdue your sins, to see you content your selves with the bare confession, and take no care to tear them from your hearts; these Holy purposes in the morning, would shake the evil Tree, and by degrees so weaken it, that it would fall of it self; If therefore you would not make a jest of Religion; if you would not play with your Con-

Confessions ; if you would not turn your Duties into *ridiculé* ; for God's sake, enter into protestations against your sins every morning, lest you increase your guilt, and like the *Aethiopian* in the Fable, who thought he should carry his burthen <sup>Vid. Ruffin.</sup> better, if he made it greater, you adde sin <sup>vit. patr. l.</sup> <sub>3. p. 38.</sub> unto sin.

*I I I. Exercise.*

*Every day to spend half an hour, or some such time, in thinking of some good thing :* An Exercise insisted on in this Chapter, v. 15. and *Psal. 1. 2. Phil. 4. 8.* I mention half an hour, because it is not easily to be conceiv'd, how any Meditation can be effectual, or do good upon the Soul, if men do not think it worth bestowing so much time at least upon't. Meditation is that noble Power, whereby we are distinguished from Brutes, and Irrational Animals ; and our being able to think, and with our thoughts to dwell upon any Divine Object, shews, that we participate of the nature of Angels. And there is such great variety of Heavenly and Spiritual Objects, that every day we may pitch upon a new Theme, every day smell to a new Flower, and with the day, change the subject of our contemplation.

D

On

*The Best Exercise.*

On *Sunday*, or the *Lords-day* rather, we may let our hearts dwell on the everlasting Kingdom of Heaven, and the vast Glory of the world to come; who they are, that shall enjoy it, on what terms that Crown may be purchased; The transcendency of that felicity, above all that the world can call Rich, and Beautiful, and Glorious; How pleasant that life will be, how free from Hunger and Thirst, and Cold and Nakednes, from all possibility of Sin, and danger, from death and sorrow, and sadness, from anxiety, corruption, perturbation; from changes, and sickness, and weakness; and infirmities; from fear, and storms, and tempests; from the assaults of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil; How full of Love, and Delight, and Ravishment it will be; How sweetly the weary Soul will rest in the bosom of everlasting Mercy; How Glorious a sight the new *Jerusalem* will be; How reviving a spectacle, to behold the Guard-Royal of Angels, shining in Robes of Light: The noble Army of Martyrs, the goodly fellowship of Patriarchs, and Prophets, and what is more, Christ, as Man, glorified with his Fathers Glory, shining like the Sun in his Meridian Lustre, and calling to his Triumphant Church,

Be-

*Bebold, thou art fair my love, thou hast ravish'd my heart ! How fair is thy Love, my Sister, my Spouse ! How much better is thy love than wine ? and the smell of thy ointment, than all spices ? Who is she that looks forth as the Morning, fair as the Moon, clear as the Sun, and terrible as an Army with Banners ? Thy Lips, Oh my spouse, drop as the Honeycomb, Honey and Milk are under thy Tongue ; and the smell of thy Tongue is like the smell of Lebanon.*

On Monday we may reflect on the last judgement, how the Lord Jesus, for all the seeming delay, shall be ere long revealed from Heaven, with his mighty Angels, in flaming Fire, to take vengeance on them, that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ ; How the King of Heaven will then sit upon the throne of his Glory, and before him will be gathered all Nations, and how he will separate them one from another, as a Shepherd divides his Sheep from the Goats ; how he'll set the Sheep on his right hand, and the Goats on the left, and say to them on his right hand, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world ; for I was a hungry, &c.* but to them on his left hand,

\*

D 2

De-

*Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels:* How different mens notions and apprehensions of God's Mercy and Justice will be then, from what they are now; What amazement, the careless besotted World will be in then; how those men that spend their days in jollity, and brutish pleasures now, will then be forced into despair, and be ready to tear themselves, and call to Rocks and Mountains, *Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him, that sitteth on the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:* How all things then will look with another face; How the humble self-denying Christian, that is now the hissing, and off-scouring of the World, will then be exalted above all Heavens, and seated in the same Throne with the Son of God; and how all those mighty nothings, that scorn and laugh now at the Religious Soul, will tremble in that day, like an Aspen-leaf, and wish that they had consider'd the things which belonged to their everlasting Peace, while the Candle of the Lord shined over their heads, and God caressed them to their happiness.

On Tuesday, we may take God's various Mercies and Providences, into serious

ous consideration, What preservations, What deliverances we have met withal; What care God hath taken of us from time to time, how he hath been with us, when we have gone through the Water, and when we have passed through the Fire, hath commanded the Flames not to kindle upon us; How ready he hath been to assist us in the fiery Furnace; How miraculously he hath appeared in our rescue, when the Fig-tree hath not blossom'd, when there hath been no Fruit in the Vine, and when the labour of the Olive hath failed, and when all Creature-comforts have failed, how often he hath been our strength, and our portion, our refuge, and our hiding place; How kind he hath been, in causing us to be born in a Christian Country, and in a Religion free from those gross errors, and superstitions, that other nominal Christians do sink into; What a mercy his Word, his Gospel, and all his Laws, and Revelations are; What assistance, what Comfort, what checks of Conscience, what motions of God's Spirit we have found, and how God hath done more for us, than we have been able to think, or to express.

On Wednesday we may take a view of our Death, and the hour of our depar-

ture out of this World ; How certain Death is, how frail our Lives, how soon this frame may be dissolved ; how easie a thing dispatches us, how the approaches of Death have made the stoutest sinner tremble, how dreadful and terrible it will be to those, who have set their Heart upon the Riches and Pleasures of this World, how wise a thing it is to prepare for it, before the evil days come, how joyful it will be, if it find us prepared for the stroke, and prepared for that Life, we must enter into, when we quit this present, how welcome Death is to a Holy Soul , how cheerfully a Pious man can say , *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace* ; how upon our death there depends Eternity, how foolish it is to slight Grace, and Mercy, till death forces us to embrace and wish for it, how Death will marr our Beauty, deface our Glory, and lay all our Grandeur in the dust, how Death is the Birth-day of a sincere Believer , brings him into a new World, a World of joys, and endless satisfactions, and is to him an entrance into Paradice, a door into the Garden of *Eden*, where no good shall be absent, and no evil present.

On Thursday we may piously survey  
the

the Torments of Hell, how just they are, how great they are, how terrible they are; how the unhappy Prisoners there roar for a drop of Water to cool their burning Tongues; how they lye tormented in those Flames, wishing in vain for some Glorified Spirit to relieve them; for some comfort from the Mansions of Glory to drop down upon them: what howling, what gnashing of Teeth there is in that outward Darkness; how Men there gnaw their Tongues for pain, and Blaspheme the God of Heaven, because of their Sores and Anguish; how endless those Calamities are; how glad those wretched Captives would be, if there might be hope of their deliverance after some Millions of Ages: how many, that have made a Jest of these Torments, have felt them in good earnest; and those that have disputed the Justice of God, in inflicting them, have to their cost, found that there is no playing with a Consuming Fire: how Men, in that *Tophet* wish, when it is too late, that they had bethought themselves, and submitted themselves betimes to *Christ's* Government, before those evil days had come upon them; how easie every Precept of the Gospcl will then seem to them; how all

*The Best Exercise.*

Pretences of Difficulty, and Impossibility will vanish, when they shall lie upon the Rack, and find by sad Experience, that it was easier to deny themselves in their Sinful Pleasures, and easier to Watch over their Hearts, than to endure such Agonies.

On *Fryday*, we may cast our eyes up-  
on the Passion and Death of *Christ*, how  
he was Mock'd, Derided, Crown'd with  
Thorns, and Crucified, to purchase an  
Eternal Redemption for us : What a  
wonderful Love it was to suffer all this  
for Enemies, that they might be recon-  
ciled to God, and become his Friends.  
What a dreadful spectacle it was, to see  
Infinite Majesty Annihilated, Infinite  
Beauty Defaced, Infinite Happiness Tor-  
mented, and Eternity Dying, and drop-  
ping into the Grave : What Patience,  
what Meekness, what Submission, what  
Gentleness he expressed under all those  
Injuries, to shew us an Example, and to  
oblige us to follow his steps. How hea-  
vy the burthen of our Sins was, that  
could make the Son of God cry out, *My  
God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*  
What a mighty Argument that Love is,  
to Love him Fervently ; How Inexcu-  
sable that Man makes himself, that be-  
lieves

lieves this Love, and yet will not be per-  
suaded by it to obey and conform him-  
self to his Will; How Mysterious this  
Love is, that the Sinner should trans-  
gress, and the Righteous be Punished  
for him; That the Innocent should suf-  
fer for the Nocent, the Judge for the  
Malefactor, the Master for the Servant,  
God for Man; What Ingratitude it  
must be, to trample on the Bloud of  
*Christ*, or or put him to open shame a-  
gain, or to make light of Salvation,  
when God hath Purchased it at so dear  
a rate; how by his Death we Live, by  
his Stripes we are heal'd, by his Wounds  
we are cured, by his Reproaches we  
are advanced to Glory, and by his being  
made a Curse for us, we escape the Curse  
of the Law; How, after so much Char-  
ity, we have all the reason in the world  
to prize him, and to count all things  
dross and dung in comparison of him;  
to delight in him, to love him, to prefer  
him before the World, and to follow the  
Lamb, whethersoever he goes.

On *Saturday* we may lay our Sins be-  
fore us, when, and where, and how of-  
ten, and how long, and how wilfully we  
have rebelled against our best and greatest  
Friend; What Light we have resisted,  
What

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What motions of God's Spirit we have slighted, What checks of Conscience, and convictions we have smothered, What exhortations, and admonitions we have baffl'd; What we have done against the First Table; What against the Second, What against God, and what against our Neighbour; How we have mispent our time, and trifled away our precious hours; How vile how wretched, how odious sin makes us in the sight of God; how we are cheated by it, how it flatters us into destruction; How, like a cunning Merchant, it sells us trash for Gold, Pebbles for Pearls, and drops of Gall for Wine and Milk: How bitter it is in its farewell; How it hardens the Heart, fears the Conscience, beguiles us of our great Reward, represents things to us under false colours; How it alienates the Mind from God, how averse it makes us from the ways of God, What ingratitude it is, how destructive it is; what hurt it hath done to *Sodom*, to *Jerusalem*, to *Cain*, to *Judas*, to *Dives*, and to innumerable Millions of Men, that would take no warning; How burthensome it will be to the Soul at last, how contrary it is to the Divine Nature, how loathsoime to Angels, how odious to a holy Soul; what Tears

Tears it hath cost *David, Peter, Paul, Mary Magdalene*, the *Publicane*, and others; what howling, ~~whit~~ terrour, what anguish, what shrieks it will cause in the Burning Lake; how easily these terrors may be prevented now by a serious repentance, and how much better it is to abandon, and undervalue the pleasures, and profits of the World now, than smart for these transitory delights to all Eternity.

Such Exercises as these keep the Soul awake, and thus rouz'd, it cannot be surpriz'd with a Lethargy. The foolish Virgins, *Matth. 25.* neglected these Meditations, and that made them slumber and sleep: Such daily Meditations keep the Soul in a readiness to obey her Great Master's Call, in case he should summon her to Judgment: These feed and strengthen the Soul as much, as Meat and Drink doth the Body; and thus supported, it grows strong, and vigorous, and emulates the felicity of Angels.

Christians, Is your Reason a Talent, or no? If it be not, then it is no gift of God; if no gift of God, why do you thank him, why do you praise him for it? If it be, why should not you give God his own again with *Usury*? If it *Mat. 25. 27.* be

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be a Talent, must not you give an account of it in the last day? Are you capable of thinking of such things as these, and will not your Lord ask you, whether you have made that use of your Reason which he intended it for? Shall you give an account of your Riches, and Honour, and Time, and Opportunities, and Liberty, and give no account of your Reason? Will it serve turn, do you think, to say, That you have employ'd it about the World? Is the World a fit Object to engross so Noble a Faculty? Shall the meanest thing, which is no more but Dross and Dung in the sight of God, employ that Power which is capable of fixing upon the Noblest Being? Would you have the Almighty so unwise, or weak, or improvident, as not to demand of you an account of his Goods, what you have done with them, whether you have traded with them, whether you have been active in your Master's Busines? Your Reason was given you to trade with it for Heaven; it was given you to help you to steer your Vessel steddily through the boisterous Sea of this World, till you come to the promised *Canaan*, and arrive at the Shore of Eternity; and will you make no other use of

of it, but think, how your lusts may be gratified, how your carnal ease may be advanced, and how your outward Man may live in mirth, and jollity ?

You complain of Ignorance ; How should you increase in Knowledge, if you will not meditate ? How should your Understanding be enlightened, if you will not make use of this Candle ? How can you but sit in darkness, if you refuse this Torch of Heaven ? By this God would teach you, by this he would instruct you, by this he would communicate himself to you ; but if you will not, whose fault is it ? whom can you blame ? how inexcusable do you make your selves ? This would clarify your Souls, drive away the Mists and Clouds, that dwell upon your Reason : but if you love Darkness better than Light, no marvel, if your Deeds be evil. It is with your Souls in this case, as it is with your Bodies, shut your Eyes, and you cannot see ; so here, keep out such Meditations as these, and you will not perceive the things of God, they'll be foolishness unto you, and you cannot perceive them, for they are spiritually discern'd.

Never complain of want of fervency for the future, while you are loath to let  
in

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in such Meditations into your Minds. Fervency does not come from nothing, it must have some root, some foundation, some fewel, some action to give it life and being; and Meditation is this root, and this foundation: This is it, must warm you; This is it, must fill your Souls with hallow'd Flames: Keep out This, and you keep out the Sun; shut the Window against these Beams, and you will freeze, and shake with cold: It's This, must make the ways of God easie to you; it's This, must make them pleasant, sweet, and amiable: This gives them Charms, This strows the way with Pearls, and shining Stones, which make the Soul enamour'd with it, and thus it flies to Heaven.

*I V. Exercise.*

*Every day to study Humility: An Exercise peremptorily commanded, Matth. 18. 3. 4. Luke 14. 7, 8. James 4. 6. Learn of me, saith the Son of God, for I am meek, and lowly in heart, Matth. 11. 29. Learn of me! What? Not to raise the Dead, not to cleanse the Lepers, not to cast out Devils, not to give sight to the Blind, not to make the Deaf to hear, not to cure the Maimed, not to walk on the Water,*

Water, not to feed five thousand Men with a few Loaves ; no, but learn of me Humility , in this Exercise your selves daily. And indeed greater Humility hath no Man shewn, for being in the *Form of God, and thinking it no robbery to be equal with God, he humbled himself, and took upon him the form of a Servant, and became obedient to the death of the Cross,* saith the Apostle, *Phil. 2. 6, 7.* This Exercise consists not onely in forcing the Body into a submissive Posture , but working the Mind into very low, and humble thoughts of our selves, and of our worth ; and he is a truly humble Man, that doth despise himself, and is contented to be counted not onely humble, but vile , and wretched too ; that refers all the honour done to himself, unto God, and rejoices in being despised, and is proud of nothing so much, as being ill spoken of , and despising praise and glory ; that compares his sins with the good works of others. and upon that account looks upon himself, as the chief of sinners, and worse than others, that affects no applause in what he doth for God, or for his Neighbour ; is contented, his defects and infirmities should be known, bears Injurys patiently, is glad of

לפניהם

הריה

דרביה

אל

תהיון

טוביה

יעזבך

*Massech. A-  
both. c. 2.  
Sect. 2.*

*R. Bechais* of mean imployments to shew his love  
in Chobat. to God, doth not care for being known,  
Lebaboth, &c. puts all thing under his feet, and looks  
7. upon himself as nothing ; is circumspect,  
שׁבָּה and modest, delights not in superfluous  
חֲבָרֶר talk, laughs but seldom, fixes his eyes on  
the ground, with the Publicane, is ashamed  
מֵן med to lift them up to Heaven, smites  
upon his breast, and cries from a mighty  
בְּזַהֲמָה וּנוֹן sense of his own vileness, *Lord, be merciful*  
*Signa humiliatis ful to me a Sinner :* That mistrusts him-  
self, sets no high value on what he  
quinq. Primum, doth, contemns the pomp and grandeur  
Cum quis of the World, admires nothing but God,  
in spiritum suum domi- and is well pleased with being made as the  
nium exer- the filth of the World, and as the off-  
cit, quan- do quis irâ scouring of all things : That doth think  
do quis excandef- himself unworthy of the least crum he  
cit in illum. eates, of the least drop of drink, he drinks ;  
Secundum, Cum quis and though the circumstances he is un-  
patienter der, and the place, office, calling, and  
onus suum fert, quan- condition, he is in, bids him use discre-  
do infortu- nium ipsi in opibus tion, in shewing and expressing his hu-  
accidit. Tertium, mility, yet in his mind throws himself at  
Cum quis spernit eum, qui ipsum laudat ob factum bonum, & confiteatur peccatum,  
quod reservat eum commisisse. Quartum, Cum quis ad honorem vel  
magnas divitias promovetur, & in praecedenti humilitate & mansutu-  
tudine perseverat. Quintum, Cum quis seipsum corripit.

riours,

rious, but of Inferious too, and could be contented to wash the Feet of the meanest Servant of his Lord and Master *Christ Jesus*; That can hear a Friendly Check with Meekness, can ask forgiveness, in case he doth unawares offend, before others, and is contented, men should misconstrue his innocent Words, and Actions, and Gestures, and Behaviour, so God doth but know the pious, and holy designs, he hath in them; That is contented, that those whom he loves, and in whom he trusted, and who have been kind to him, should forsake him, abandon him, and persecute him, and can bear with the ingratitude of Men, to whom he hath done many good turns, and can find more comfort and satisfaction in the light of Gods Countenance, than other Men do in the Favours, and Presents of the greatest Monarchs; That can modestly decline great Employments, and thinks himself unfit for weighty Provinces; That can be contented to see his Neighbour honour'd, and himself slighted, and hath courage to refuse such Honours, as are not convenient for his place, and station; That submits to the Will of God in all things, and *both hopes, and quietly waits for the Salvation of the Lord.*

E

And

## The Best Exercise.

And this is that Humility, the Gospel presses, and whereof the Captain of our Salvation hath given us so illustrious an Example. This is that Virtue which *Cassian* justly calls the *Corner-stone of all Virtues, the Foundation of Religion, the Ladder to intimate Converses with the Almigh-*

*Vid. Cassian Collat.  
15 c. 7.*

*ty, and a gift beyond that of Miracles;* and this is that Employment which justly deserves our Care, and Labour, and exercise.

*Vid. Bed. lib. 2. c. 2.* When *Austin* the Monk had summon-  
ed the British Bishops and Clergy to Conform to the Church of *Rome*, and to yeild obedience and submission to that See, the Britans consulted with a certain holy Man, to know whether he thought it expedient for them to submit to *Austin*, or no. The good old man told them, That if they found him to be a man of God, and a true follower of *Jesus*, they should not dispute their Submission, and the onely Character to know that, said he, was to see and take notice whether he were a meek and humble Man: If he were, it was a certain sign that he bore the Yoak of Christ, but if stout and proud, whatever his pretences might be, he could not be of God. And accordingly when they found the insolent Monk carry  
it

it with a high hand, and scarce vouchsafe to Salute them; they rejected his proud dictates, though it was with the loss of their lives.

And though I like not that piece of Humility, whereby men confess themselves Guilty of the same sins, that others are, when they are not, on purpose to win others to Repentance, or to preserve them from despair, as he in \* *Rufinus*, who when his Neighbour had committed Fornication, and thereupon was ready to cast away all hope, pretended to have committed the same Crime, that he might thereby oblige him to apply himself together with him to the severities of Repentance; yet as no man is to do evil, that good may come from it, and as the Devil is not to be gratified, that God may be pleased, so where a Christian, with || *Eugenia*, when moving in the Sphere of Honour and Dignity, can stoop to the humblest, and lowest Offices to advance God's Glory, and with King † *A- benner*, think so meanly of himself, that he doth not think himself worthy to name the Name of God, and with the Emperour *Theodosius*, converse with the meanest Men, that have the Image of God upon them; and with the noble *Olympias*

\* *Vid Rufin. vit. Pat. lib. 3. c. 12.*

|| *Vid. Mar- tyrol. Rom. 28. Decemb.*

† *Meno- log. Graz- corum, 24. Decemb.*

‡ *Vid. Vin- cent. Spec. Histor. lib. 15.*

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in *Palladius*, can lead a life without the least affectation of Vain-glory, carry a mind about him, free from Arrogance in the midst of a thousand acclamations, and not be ashamed of the meanest habit, honour all Men, succour the Weak, attend the Sick, help the Lame, protect the Aged, relieve the Distressed, be serviceable and charitable to the poorest and meanest, shed tears abundantly from the considera-

Martyr. *14. pbrasia*, stoop to him that hates him, and *MartiiMc-nolog.Grae.* pray for the person that hath injured him, *25. Julii.* and move his fellow Christians to be kind *Frater qui-dam inter-rogavit Se.* it kindly when he is reproved, and instead of being angry, thanks the faithful Monitor. Such a one may promise *respondit ei* himself the special presence of the High *Sentx, ut* and Lofty one, who Inhabits Eternity, *bene facias* for with him will I dwell, saith the Lord, *bi malefa-ciunt. Pe.* that is of a contrite and humble Spirit, *Isai-lag. in Vit. 17. 15.*

*Fa. c. 63.* And though this be look'd upon by the Frantick World, as baseness of Spirit, Cowardize, and a low-bred mind, yet such is the Nature of Religion, that God's thoughts are not, as our thoughts, nor are his ways, as our ways, and what is highly esteemed among Men,

is *Abomination in the sight of God*, Luke 16. 15. And whoever will be a Friend of God must be an Enemy to the World, James 4. 4. and be so far from conforming to the World, that he must become a Fool in the Eyes of the World, 1 Cor. 3. 18.

I have read of a Pious man (whether it be Parable or History, it matters not) who having a Demoniack brought to him, to expel the Devil out of him, was after great importunity perswaded to command the evil Spirit to depart from God's Creature. The Fiend hearing the unwelcome voice, cried out, *I go*, but pray tell me Father, who they are, that be the Sheep, and who the Goats, the Gospel speaks of. The humble man replied, Who the Sheep are, God knows, but sure I am, that I am one of the Goats. And when he had said so, the Fiend replied, this Humility is the Charm that drives me out. No doubt this is a powerful Weapon to keep off and resist the great Enemy, and he that Exercises himself in this Humility, imitates the best Pattern, even God himself, whose Humility is such, that Men and Angels stand amazed at it; and it could not have entred into our thoughts, that God

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could stoop so low , or condescend , as we find he doth , if himself had not been pleased to reveal this self - humiliation . He hath revealed it , and we have seen the Almighty enter into a Virgins womb to be born of her , whom he had made before ; We have seen how the Son of God hath loved his Enemies , even with that dearness and tenderness , that he hath laid down his life for them ; We have seen how the Omnipotent Creator Courts his Creatures , his Rebellious Subjects , to Repentance ; We have seen how notwithstanding the frequent repulses they give him , notwithstanding their frequent refusals of his stupendious offers , he renews his Entreaties , repeats his Expostulations , and when the Prodigal wretch is yet a far off , and approaching his Fathers house with fear and trembling , runs and hath compassion , and falls upon his neck , and kisses him .

This Humility makes us like unto the Angels of God , for as bright and as glorious Ministers as they are , as powerful Princes as they are , for the Kings of the Earth are subject to their power , yet behold , they fly down from above , and Minister to those , that shall be Heirs of Salvation , even to the meanest Saint , to the

the poorest Believer, to a *Paul* in Prison, to a *Daniel* in a Lions Den. *Hac Iter est Superis ad magni Tecta Tonantis.* This is the way that leads to Glory: so true is it, what the Religious *Syncretica* said of old, That as a Ship cannot be held together without Nails, so a Christian, and *Christ Jesus* cannot hold together without Humility. *The Tree of Life*, said the holy *Hyperichius*, grows in *Heaven*, and *Humility is the Grace, that climbs and touches the Top of it.*

This leads to the Highest joys, to the richest content, to the greatest satisfaction, and he is happier that sees his own sins, than he that sees an Angel, for an *Numb. 22.*  
*All* can see a Spirit, but none but a Favourite of Heaven beholds his sins with humility, or self-abhorrency. Antiquity speaks of the Devil appearing to one in the shape of an Angel of Light, and saying to the Devout Hermit, I am the Angel *Gabriel*, and am sent to thee: Oh, said the Devout man, Take heed thou dost not mistake thy Message, or the Man, to whom thou art sent; I am sure, thou art not sent to me, for I am not worthy of the sight or company of Angels; and hereupon the fraudulent Spirit disappeared. In the same manner he appeared to another, saying,

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I am *Christ*, come down from the Regions of Glory to visit thee: The humble Man answered, I do not desire to see *Christ* in this Life; all my hope is, I shall see him in the next.

*Humility eludes, and mocks the Stratagems of the Prince of Darkness, and how God rewards, and crowns it, the Blessed Virgin hath told us, Luke 1. 51, 52. He bath shewed strength with his Arm, he bath scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart; He bath put down the Mighty from their seats, and bath exalted the humble and meek.*

Indeed, we see how Meadows, and Vallies are laden with Fruit, and Corn, and Enamell'd with Flowers, while the higher Mountains remain barren, and unfruitful. O Christians, did you but know what Treasures lie hid in this Exercise, you would be so far from counting it troublesome, that you would be ambitious of it. In this Exercise consisteth the Mystery of Religion; the richest Influences of Heaven come down upon the Soul, that looks upon her self, as nothing. To her the Almighty reveales himself, and here he is ready to build Tabernacles; the sweetest commun-

munications of Grace are vouchsafed to him, that is acquainted with this lowliness; into such a heart the Joys of the Holy Ghost flow with a Spring-tide; and he that would understand the secrets of the Lord, this is the School where he may learn them; and if he become a great proficient here, he may promise himself a more then ordinary intercourse betwen God and his Soul. The humble Shepherds are honoured with the first news of *Christ's Nativity*, while the lofty Pharisees at *Jerusalem* are kept ignorant of these Glad Tidings; and that which mov'd God to send *Nathan* the Prophet to *David*, to tell him of his singular love and compassion to him, was the voice of that Great humble Man, *I will yet be more vile then thus, and will be base in mine own eyes*, 2 Sam. 6. 22.

I'll conclude this *Exercise* with a passage out of a Learned Jew. *The advantages of Humility*, faith he, *confist in Six Particulars*, Three whereof do respect this Present, and three the next Life. First, It <sup>ca. 7. fol.</sup> makes a Man contented in all Conditions; <sup>64. Edit.</sup> Mant. 1589

תיעlich הכניעה בעוני העולם הוא והעולם הבא  
דב ששורה דבריך ונו: אחר מהם שיטח בחלקוונו:

for

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for he that's proud and arrogant, the whole World, and all that's in it, is not able to satisfie his lofty and rising thoughts, much less that, which God hath appointed him for his Portion; but he that is humble, lives contentedly, and is satisfied with what Providence hath allotted him. Secondly, The Humble Man bears adversity patiently, whereas the Proud Mans fear is great, and his Patience inconsiderable, when troubles come upon him. Thirdly, The Humble Man is grateful and acceptable to Men, and Men love him and esteem him: And to this purpose I must tell you a Story of a King, that being asked, How he came to be so great; Answered, That he never saw any Man, whom he did not esteem wiser, than himself; and those that he look'd upon to be wiser than himself, them he ever thought to fear God, more than himself: and if he met with any, that was manifestly more foolish than himself, he presently reflected, that this Man would have a less account to give unto God in the last day, then himself: If he met with any that were older then himself, he humbly thought, that their Merits must needs be greater than his own; and if those, he met with, were younger then himself, he considered, that their sins must needs be fewer, then his own; if he met with

with any of his equals, their heart, thought he, in all likelihood, is better then mine; if they were richer then himself, he considered, that they did more good in the World then himself; if poorer, that then by reason of their poverty they must needs have more humble and contrite hearts, and therefore be better, then himself. Fourthly, The humble man arrives to true and solid wisdom before other men, not onely because he is desirous to learn, and loves to sit at the feet of his Teachers, but God also helps him to attain unto more, then ordinary wisdom; whereas the proud and haughty, being loth to learn that wisdom, which crofes flesh and blood, remains ignorant of the most solid wisdom. Fifthly, The humble man runs more clearly in the ways of Gods Testimonies, boggles at nothing that God commands, and expresses alacrity, and readiness, at the voice of the greatest, and weightiest, as well as at the least, and easiest Precepts. Sixthly, The humble mans devotion is the onely acceptable devotion to God, his Sins are pardoned, his Iniquities are easily forgiven, For an humble and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

*V. Exercise.*

*Every day to bridle our Tongues, and to set a Watch over the doors of our Lips, and to take care that our Speech be always with Grace season'd with Salt, that we may know how to answer every man; An Exercise enjoynd, Col. 4. 6. Ephes. 4. 25, 29. Ephes. 5. 3, 4. Matth. 12. 34, 35, 36.* It was a good Observation of one, who Travell'd with some Men, that talk'd loosely and inconsiderately, and whom St. Anthony the Hermite took for excellent Company; Yes (saith he) they are good Men, but the House they live in wants a Door with a Lock and Key, for whoever pleases may go in, and take away what they possess: His meaning was, That they took no care of their Words, that the Door of their Lips was always open, and that they talk'd any thing that came into their Minds. *The Tongue, saith St. James, is a little Member, but contains a world of Iniquity,* James 4. 5, 6. So that the greatness of the danger, enforces the necessity of this Exercise.

This Exercise consists partly in watching against the sins, the Tongue is subject to, partly in using the Tongue to such discourses, as are most proper for a man,  
that

that pretends to be a follower of *Jesus*. The sins of the Tongue are without number, yet the most remarkable are these following: 1. Blasphemy. 2. Murmuring. 3. Defending our sins. 4. Perjury. 5. Lying. 6. Detraction. 7. Accusing others falsely. 8. Much speaking. 9. Idle words. 10. Profane jesting, or abusing of Scripture. 11. Indiscreet expressions. 12. Railing. 13. Quarreling. 14. Laughing, and deriding those that are serious. 15. Evil Counsel. 16. Sowing of Discord and Discontent among Neighbours. 17. Cursing, and customary Swearing. 18. Flattery. 19. Double tongued dealings. 20. False Reports. 21. Boasting, and speaking in ones own Praise. 22. Revelation of a Secret. In vain doth he pretend to exercise himself unto Godliness, that watches not against these sins, or seeing himself in danger of running into them, steps not back, or climbs up with his thoughts to Heaven, as he that sees a wild Beast coming towards him, climbs up into a Tree, to secure himself.

There is hardly any Precept either more spoken of, or recommended more, either by the Holy Ghost in Scripture, or by holy, wise, and sober men in their Books,

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Books, then this watching over our tongues, and words, and speeches, for indeed *By thy Words thou shalt be Justified, and by thy Words thou shalt be Condemned*, saith Christ, Matth. 12. 37. Before the power of Godliness was turned into a Form; the Christians that lived then studied this point with that care and assiduity, and became such Proficients in it, that men might converse with them, and keep them company a week together, and not hear one idle word drop from them, but what was to the use of edifying, and Ministered Grace unto the hearers; and till men come to believe that their tongues are not their own, but Gods, who made them and designed them for the noblest uses, and must therefore be employed as he shall think fit to direct, they are yet far from the Kingdom of God, and *Aliens* from that Common-wealth of Saints, who are to be Heirs of Salvation; and he knows not what Self-denial means, that doth not deny himself in speaking things which the Holy Ghost hath forbid, and thought improper, undecent, or extravagant, and he that cannot speak, but must offend in one or other of the aforementioned particulars, had better hold his tongue, and spend

spend his time in silence. It was therefore excellent advice which St. Ambrose Ambr. de Offic. lib. I. c. 2. 3. gave to his people, *Let's learn to hold our Tongues, that we may be able to speak; why shouldest thou run thyself into danger of Condemnation, when by silence thou mayest be infinitely safer?* I have seen thousands run into sin by speaking, but few by holding their peace; most men love to talk, because they know not how to be quiet. He is the wise man that knows when to speak, and when to be silent; if of every idle word Men shall give an account in the day of Judgment, how much more of filthy Communications? *Thy mind is thy Lands and Houses, thy heart is thy Gold, thy speech thy Silver.* Therefore make a Hedge about thy Lands, and cast up Trenches against thy Thoughts, Arm thy House with diligent care, that thy unreasonable passions, like Thieves, do not break in and spoil it, that no disorderly motion make an irruption, and lay it waste, that those that go by, may not pluck off thy Grapes. Watch over thy inward man, do not neglect him as contemptible; tye up thy Speech, cut off its luxuriant Branches; let it not play the wanton, lest it drag thee into sin; restrain it, keep it within its Banks, Water soon gathers Mud; Bind up thy Senses, let them

not

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not be loose or Gadding, make a Door to thy Lips, to shut it when there is occasion, and to open it when there is necessity. Bring thy tongue under the Toak, and let it be subject to thy Reason. Keep the Bridle in thine own hands, weigh thy words in a Balance, that thy sense may be ponderous, thy speech solid, and thy words move within their bounds.

But watching against the sins of the Tongue is but one half of this Exercise, speaking of God and heavenly and spiritual things is another, as we may see Col. 3. 16. an Exercise commanded already in the days of Moses, Deut. 6. 5, 6,7. and duely observ'd by men, who took care of their Salvation, long before the Gospel was proclaimed in the World, which makes the Prophet take notice, *Then they who feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearken'd and heard it, and a Book of Remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and thought upon his Name, and they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my Jewels, and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serves him,* Mal. 3. 16, 17.

Indeed Spiritual and Heavenly things  
<sup>1 Cor. 12.</sup> are the best things, and therefore deserve  
 13. our

our speaking of them. If meaner things, \* *Ubi se-  
dent duo,  
qui Legem  
ex-tractant,  
cum illis est  
Shekinah  
Rabbini in  
Pirke A-  
both.*

There is hardly any man, that makes a shew of Religion, or frequents the publick Ordinances of God, but will grant and confess, That the concerns of God, and of our Souls, do infinitely exceed all Earthly Objects in Worth, Value and Dignity; but then, not to speak of them is an omission, which contradicts that belief, and makes that faith all shadow, and imagery. He that believes that these are the best things, and yet cares not for discoursing of them to his Neighbour, gives himself the lie, and silently confesses, that whatever his pretence may be, they are the meanest, lowest, and most incon siderable things, for he doth not think them worth opening his lips about them. And as these are the best, so they are the most necessary things, *Luke 10.42.* Can there be any thing more needful, than God's Favour? any thing more necessary, than the Love of God? any thing of greater necessity than the true way to inherit eternal Life? Without it we deny our be-

ing, and dependance upon God, and disclaim our Relation to him; as his Creatures, as his Servants, as his Children, put our selves into the number of his Enemies, make our selves Objects of his Anger, renounce our Allegiance to him, and deprive our selves of all those Comforts, which arise from a sense of his Paternal Protection and Providence; and if they be the most necessary things, certainly they deserve, certainly they challenge our frequent discoursing of them, for we therefore talk of our Worldly Affairs, because we look upon them as necessary, and by making this our Rule, we confess the absolute necessity of speaking of things, that are infinitely more necessary.

We can be happy without Riches, happy without Honour and Applause from men, happy without a Palace, happy without a Vineyard, happy without a full Barn, but we cannot be happy without Grace, without Godliness, or without a sense of the Divine Goodness. So then, Spiritual things are most necessary, more necessary than Meat, and Drink, and Cloathing, or Provision, and because more necessary than these, it must unavoidably follow, that it is more necessary to talk to-  
ge-

gether of the things, that belong to our Peace, than of what we shall eat, or of what we shall drink, or of where withal we shall be cloathed, and so much Christ intimates in that saying, *Matth. 6. 33. Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and its Righteousness.*

And as these Heavenly Objects are the most necessary things, so they are matters of the greatest consequence; an everlasting Estate depends upon them; Where a man embraces them, as his greatest Treasure, an Eternity of Joy attends him, where he slighteth, or despiseth them, an Eternity of Torments follows him at his heels, and shall not things of that consequence merit our conferences about them? The man that fears his Houle may be on Fire, talks of nothing so much as his fears, and the damage he shall suffer by the Conflagration. The man that hopes to inherit such an Estate, or such a curious Seat, is wonderfully pleased with Discourses of the Situation, of the largeness, fairnes, fruitfulness, and pleasantness of the place, and shall he that hath either reason to fear, that his Portion shall ere long be howling and gnashing of teeth, in an eternal Prison, or hath reasonable hopes that an everlasting King-

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dom of Joy, and Blis, and Glory, shall fall to his share, before a few days or years come to an end, shall, or can he sit still under these hopes or fears, and not express his sense of it to his Neighbour when he meets him?

What are our Tongues given us for, but for Discourses and Conferences of this Nature? If the righteous man is the onely wise man, as *Solomon* assures us, and prosecutes the true end of his Creation, and consequently is a Pattern, or Original for others to write Copies by, then from the employment he puts his tongue to, we may conclude, what it is created for, and of this employment, the inspired King gives us an account, *Psalm 37. 30. For the mouth of the Righteous, saith he, speaketh Wisdom, and his Tongue talks of Judgement.* To be able to discourse of secular Affairs, and Businesses of our Callings, and Professions in the World, is indeed one end, why that Member was added to the rest, but it is one of the lower and subordinate ends: The chief and principal end, is this we speak of, for whatever things God makes any Creature capable of, the noblest Acts of that Creature are the chief end for which it was vouchsafed

safed a Being, and from hence the consequence is very easie, that discoursing of Spiritual things must needs be the chief end, for which our Tongues were given us, for these are the noblest Acts, our Tongues are capable of, such discourses being the Trumpets as it were, whereby we Praise and Magnify our Maker, and shew forth the Glory of our great Redeemer, and Proclaim his Goodness to the Children of Men: We know that God made all things for his Glory, indeed without it he could not have acted like Himself, or like an Infinite Spirit of Infinite Wisdom and Goodness; and then certainly our Tongues are chiefly designed for such Conferences; and he that neglects this Exercise, frustrates God's Designs, and reverses as much as in him lies, the very end of his Creation, *For ye are a chosen Generation, a Royal Priesthood, a holy Nation, a peculiar People, that ye should shew forth the Praises of him, who hath called you out of Darkness into his marvelous Light,* 1 Pet.

2. 9.

How can we want matter of Discourse, when we hear so many Sermons, when we have liberty to peruse the Holy Scriptures, and read such variety of good

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Books, which are so many Comments upon the Bible? Not a Precept in the Gospel, that is given to regulate our Thoughts, or Words, or Actions, or Passions; not a Command, not a Direction lest us by our Master, but is a fit Subject for such Holy Conferences. Our Experience will administer matter in these Cases; What experience we have had of Gods goodness; what experience of the fulfilling of such a Promise; What experience in Prayer; What experience in Mortification; What we have found in such a Duty; What effect our earnest striving, and wrestling with Almighty God, hath had; What influence such a Fast, or Abstinence hath had upon us; What content we have found under such severities; What Assurances of Gods Spirit we have found in our fighting against Temptations; What comfort in such Afflictions; What hath kept us from sinking; How God hath supported us in such a Calamity, and hath been our refuge, and a present help in the time of Trouble; when the Earth hath been moved, and when the Hills have been ready to be cast into the midst of the Sea.

Have not we Defects and Infirmities enough

enough to Discourse of? Do we find no Remora's, no Impediments, that let us in our course to Heaven? Do not we fall short of that Christian Perfection, the *Holy Ghost* urges? And is not the zeal, and fervency for Gods glory, we find in our selves very inconsiderable? Are we not very apt to sink into Hypocrisy, and to be backward to the greater and weightier matters of the Law? Do we not embrace Excuses suggested by the Devil, whereby we leave the most excellent Duties undone? Do not we find Imperfections, and Infirmitie's in our holy performances? Do we find no coldness, no deadnes, no indisposedness in Gods Service? if we do, how can we want matter of Discourse?

How many good thoughts come into our Minds, when we wake first in the Morning, when we lie down at Night, when we are walking, when we are sitting down, when we light into ill Company, when we meet with good Society, when we meet with Signal Providences, and Deliverances, when we receive unexpected Blessings from Heaven, when Men wrong us or do us an Injury? What edifying expressions and discourses

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may we build upon these thoughts, and contemplations, when we visit one another?

How many excellent examples of holy Men and Women may we pitch upon in our Discourses? Can there be more edifying Discourse, than to relate and represent to one another the Holy Actions of Saints, either departed, or living yet? how humble St. *Paul* was, how courageous St. *Peter*, how fervent *David*, how meek *Moses*, how patient *Job*? How such a one scorned to be called the Son of *Pharaohs* Daughter, and fix'd his eyes upon the great Recompence of Reward? another took pleasure in being reviled: another thanked God in the midst of Torments, another Pray'd for those that Stoned him, another chose Poverty and Contempt, and the loss of all things, that he might win *Christ*. Excellent matter of holy Discourse, and such as in all probability St. *James* did aim, and point at, James 5. 10. *Take, my Brethren, the Prophets, who have spoken in the Name of the Lord, for an Example of suffering, affliction, and of patience.*

And if this will not do, there are so many Motives, and encouraging Arguments to Goodness, both we and others do,

do make use of, that we may as soon want Light at Noon, as matter of Pious and Religious Conference, when we converse with our Fellow-Christians: What moves us to be meek? What prevails with us to be patient? What makes us contented in all conditions? What composes our Spirits in fiery Tryals? What puts us upon Self-denial? What Incentives do we make choice of to the Love of God? How came we by that serious Frame of Spirit we are in? How came we to conquer such a Lust? What did we to vanquish such a Corruption? How did we compass that Facility, and Willingness, to conform to God, which seems to be in us? How came Christ's Yoke to be easie to us, and his Burthen light? How came we to be rid of such a Sin? How came we to Extricate our selves from such Snares, and Deceits of the Devil? The various ways and methods, whereby we do arrive to such perfections as these, are so many Doors of Utterance, and will serve to make us open our mouths boldly; and he that doth so, doth without all controversie, exercise himself unto Godliness: And to illustrate this exercise by some examples, it will not be impertinent to set down

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down here the Discourse of the Twelve  
*Faschas. c.* *Hermits in Paschasius*, that meeting once  
 44. a Week, gave one another an Account of  
 their Spiritual Progress, and thriving in  
 Grace, and one of their Conferences was  
 this:

The *First* said, Every day I watch against evil Thoughts, and Lusts, as I do against Serpents and Scorpions; and as soon as I find them rising in my heart, I threaten them, and am heartily angry with them, and chide them for their insolence and sauciness, and ask them, How they dare be so bold, as to profane a Temple of the *Holy Ghost*?

The *Second* said, I look upon myself every day as a Stranger, and Pilgrim, that must suffer many inconveniences, troubles and injuries, till I come to my Journeys end; and I ever look upon the Morrow, as the day, wherein I shall be deliver'd from the burthen of the Flesh, and from all possibility of sinning, and so bear up, under all the Crosses, that befall me.

The *Third* said, Every day very early in the Morning I get up, and go to my God,

God, and throwing my self down upon my Face, adore him, and intercede with him for the whole World ; and this done, I go and deny my Body that ease and satisfaction, which flesh and blood doth crave, on purpose to Crucifie the World to my self, and my self unto the World.

The *Fourth* said, Every day I take a Turn, and walk upon the Mount of *Olives*, and there behold my Dear Redeemer Bleeding, and do so Reflect on his Passion, and the Agonies he endured for my Sin, till the Spectacle melts me into Tears, and forces me into very strong Resolutions to imitate him, whom my Soul doth love.

The *Fifth* said, Every day with the Eyes of my Understanding, I behold the Angels of God (as *Jacob* once did in a Dream) Ascending and Descending for the Salvation of Mens Souls ; and this Love, and Care, and Tenderness so works upon me, that I do both wish that all Mankind may be fayed, and come to the knowledge of the Truth, and do give more diligence to make my Calling and Election sure.

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The Sixth said, Every day, I make it my business to Meditate on that saying of Christ, *Come to me all that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you, take my Yoke upon you,* and I fancy I hear this Voice behind me, O Christians, if you mean to be my Brethren, suffer with me, that ye may Reign with me; Die with me, that ye may live with me; Conquer with me, that ye may sit with me in my Throne, even as I overcame, and am set down with my Father in his Throne.

The Seventh said, Every day I sit in Council with three grave Senators, Faith, Hope, and Charity, and the effect of this Consultation is, my Faith becomes more firm, my Hope more lively, my Charity more spreading, and more fervent, and I dare not willingly offend any man, but think my self obliged to suffer long, and to be kind, not to behave my self unseemly, not to seek my own, not to be easily provoked, and to think no evil.

The Eighth said, Every day I do expect the Devil, and look for his Assaults, and Stratagems, and when I see him coming in my Mind, I run to God, and hide my

my self under the shadow of his Wings,  
and beg hard that his fiery Darts may  
not hurt me.

The *Ninth* said, Every day with my thoughts I ascend into Heaven, and there listen to the *Hallelujahs*, and harmonious Voices, of the Blessed Angels, and refresh my mind, and all that is within me, with those melodious Songs, and when I do so, I die to the World, trample upon all these Sublunary objects, and despise those things which sensual men admire, as dirt and dung.

The *Tenth* said, Every day, I do set God before me, and look upon him as present, and standing on my right hand, and I strive to have this thought continually in mind, whence it comes to pass, that I speak, and do nothing but with great consideration and deliberation.

The *Eleventh* said, Every day I call the Graces and Gifts of Gods Spirit about me, and when I am going out, I cry, *Where are you all, come about me my faithful Servants*, and these are the Retinue, I go attended withal; in this State, and Pomp, I set forth, with this Guard about

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bout me I walk, and no Devil dares approach to hurt me.

The Twelfth said, Where-ever I go, I see my Sins go before me, and whether I look on my Right or Left hand, they still appear to me in very dreadful shapes, and that makes me every day take a view of Hell, and there I behold with amazement the many millions of poor tormented Creatures, that howl and shriek, and lament, that they have neglected so great a Salvation, and this doleful cry makes me watch against every weight, and every sin, which does so easily beset me.

And now, Brethren, If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy; and let not this Exercise seem grievous to you. Plead not that it is out of fashion; if it be so, do you make it modish. You know who it is that beseeches you by the Mercies of God, *not to conform yourselves to the World:* If it be out of fashion to be saved, will you therefore resolve to be damn'd? Bear up against the stream; Be not ashamed of Christ, and of his Gospel: You dare not

Rom. 12.2

not plead this Excuse in the last day, why should you alleadge it now? Here is no Rhetorick required, no Eloquence, no Florid Learning; O that you were but more sensible of your spiritual wants! O that your hearts were but more inflamed with the love of God! O that you did but observe God's dealings with your Souls more, and would take more notice of God's Providences, and the Operations of his Hands! You would not then want Language to express your selves in to your Children, Servants, Friends, Neighbours and Acquaintance, but the sense within would force you to say with *David, Come, and I will tell you what the Lord hath done for my Soul,* Psal. 66. 19. Do not think Heaven so cheap a thing as your careless Neighbours do; either Christ and Heaven, and our future Glory, are worth talking of, or nothing can be worth it. Dare to prefer Heaven before the World; and in your Words, as well as Actions, manifest the sincerity of your resolution; you cannot pretend impossibility, you have a Tongue, you have Reason, you hear the Ministers of the Gospel, you see God's Providences, you know Heaven and Hell are before you, you read many excellent Lessons, what should hinder

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der you from speaking of these weighty things? It's but bending and applying your Tongues to such Subjects, and they'll yield as easily, as they do when you bend them to frivolous, vain, and idle talk, to gossiping, or complementing, or prating of other Mens Matters. You will rest the sweeter at night, when you have been talking of good things in the day-time: you'll go with greater comfort to Bed, your sleep and repose will be more pleasing, and satisfactory, when you have exercised your Tongues in matters of this nature: When you talk of such heavenly and spiritual things, you are not exposed to so many Temptations, as otherwise you are, when in company with others; you may sin in talking of your Neighbours, you may sin in speaking of the Actions of Kings and Princes, you may sin in telling things and paslages for true, which have no other foundation, but an uncertain report, you may sin in foolish jestings, and jeering one another; but in discoursing of heavenly things, you are safe, you are in God's way, God walks with you, bears you company, and the Enemy of your Souls will despair of prevailing with you, you shun the occasions of evil, and you prepare your selves to quench

quench the fiery darts of the Devil : hereby you may do good to others, comfort your Neighbours, support your fellow-Christians, and in such Conferences a word may drop from you , as may keep those, you discourse with , from despair, and which may be an encouragement to them, as long as they live.

It was bravely done of that Young-<sup>Hieron.</sup> Man under *Decius* his Persecution , who <sup>Vit. Pauli.</sup> being by force tied upon a Down-bed in a Room made for Pride and Luxury , and sollicitied to Uncleanness by a Harlot, sent to him by the Gouvernor on purpose to provoke him to sin, bit his Tongue to pieces , that the smart and pain might drown all sence of Voluptuousnes, and so spit it in the Harlots face: But here we require no such severity, but all that is expected from you in this Exercise, is to keep your Tongues from evil, and your Lips from speaking guile ; to speak of the Glorious Honour of God's Majesty, and of his Wondrous Works; to utter abundantly the memory of his great Goodness , and to declare his Righteousnes: The very Heathen have seen the necessity of this Exercise, therefore they shall <sup>Stob.Serm.</sup> 35 de Gar-<sup>rulitate,</sup> be your Judges in the last day ; and I know not how to express their sence of

this duty better, than by setting down the words of the sober *Epicetus: Prescribe thyself a Rule*, saith he, which thou mayst observe, when thou art either by thyself, or in company with others; Either be silent, or let the things thou speakest of, be necessary and profitable. When thou speakest, talk not of light, and trivial things, as Wrestling, and Horses, or Fencers, or Swords, or Meat, or Drink, neither spend thy time in praising, or dispraising Men; but let thy discourse be of something noble, decent, grave and serious: but if this cannot be, hold thy peace. Thus did the Primitive Saints; and when they visited one another, their care was, to put one another in mind of the Words, and Actions of their Great Redeemer, what he did, and what he promised, and what he suffered; how kind he was to this Blind Man, how favourable to that Leper; how loving to the Lame, how compassionate to the Blind, how gracious to his Enemies, how free and communicative to his Friends; what pity he expressed to sinful Men, how meek he was before his Accusers, how patient before his Tormentors; how he ran to kiss the Penitent, how he wept over the obstinate Jews, and how he long'd for Mens Salvation. These were their discourses, and

and they would hardly give themselves liberty to talk of their Worldly Affairs, except necessity forced them; for they believ'd, that by their Charter, they were to have their Conversation in Heaven, and this they thought import'd talking much of their Heavenly Country, and of the Joys and Hallelujahs of that Kingdom. It was the custom of some Heathen Priests of old, in the service of their Gods, to wash, or dip their Tongues in Honey; an excellent Emblem to teach us, how our Tongues must be purified, and sanctified, and seasoned with that Word, which is sweeter than the Honey, and the Honey-comb, *Psal. 19. 10.* And indeed then our Words are sweet, and there is Milk and Honey under our Tongues, when we *exhort, and admonish one another daily, taking heed lest we be harden'd through the deceitfulness of sin,* *Heb. 3. 13.*

Porphy.  
de Anro.  
Nymph.

#### VI Exercise.

*Every day to watch against those sins, which in the eye of the World are small, and inconsiderable, an Exercise commanded Matth. 5. 19. 1 Cor. 5. 6. Jude vers. 23. Indeed, Christ's whole Sermon upon the Mount is chiefly bent against those sins,*

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which

which purblind Mortals are apt to mis-call little, and trivial. The Pharisees were such ill Divines, that they not only believed, but taught the people too, That in the Ten Commandments nothing was forbid, but onely the gross errors of Mens Lives, and Conversations: by example, in the sixth Commandment they thought, God required nothing, but abstaining from downright Murther, and accordingly they made nothing of envy, or malice, or grudges, or secret heart-burnings; nothing of words spoke in anger, nothing of contumelious speeches, nothing of giving Men ill names, or ill language, nothing of expressions, whereby they derogated from their Neighbours credit, and wounded his reputation; which wilful, and notorious mistakes, Christ rectifies in that Sermon, and bids them look for God's eternal wrath for these offences, as well, as for the greater enormities. So in the seventh Commandment, they flattered themselves, that they did rarely well obey the great Lawgiver, when they kept themselves from being polluted with their Neighbours Wives, and from the A&t of Adultery; but the Son of God shews them their monstrous errors, and proves to them, that not only

only that detestable Act is prohibited in that Law, but all those Acts, and Occasions, that lead to it, as wanton glances, lascivious thoughts, obscene expressions, running to places, where temptations grow, bad intentions, lustful touches, evil desires, and these he assures them lead to Hell, as well, as the grosser villainies. In the same manner, they restrain'd the third Commandment to Perjury only in a publick cause, and so thought light of customary Oaths; these were but matters of laughter, and the people by their permission, and approbation, in their common speeches, and communications, swore by Heaven, and by Earth, by their Heads, and by *Jerusalem*, and he that did so, did not lose the reputation of a sober Man: The Lord Jesus protests against this abuse too, and lets them see, that He, who forbid Perjury, did forbid these common, and customary Oaths too, and was resolved to revenge, and punish the Offenders for so doing, and did not so much as permit strong Affirmations in common discourse, and ordinary matters, but allow'd onely bare Affirmations, and Negations.

Loving those that loved them, and doing good to them, that did good to

G. 3. them.

them, they thought, was all that God required in that Royal Law, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self.* Hating their Enemies, or doing them all the mischief they could, they look'd upon onely, as a venial extravagance of passion. So they did but perform the task, and duty of Prayer, they did not think, any sin could be committed in the manner of the performance, and therefore wandring thoughts, and affectation of vain glory, or laying the stress upon the length of Prayer, they thought were no sins at all ; or if sins, not worth regarding, or confessing. And by the same Rule they walk'd in their Alms; and Fasting, thinking the letter of the Law required no more, than the outward observance of the duty : as for a suitable frame of heart, they did not look upon the want of it, as damnable, or worth their care to get it supplied from Heaven. Thus these Men lessen'd and extenuated their Offences, and having once brought them into the number of little Sins, they excluded them from their care, and would not suffer their Consciences to be troubled for them ; and though they had very severe Exercises, and disciplined their Bodies to a miracle, yet they made watching against little

little Sins no part of their Exercise; and this neglect draws that dreadful protestation from the Son of God, *Matth. 5. 20.*  
*I say unto you, That except your Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of God.*

What these little Sins are, and how they may be known, is a Question that any Man of common sense may soon satisfie, and resolve himself in, that will either compare his Actions with the precepts of the Gospel, or attend, and observe his own neglects, or the practices of such of his Neighbours, that in the Eye of the World pass for sober Men, and yet are no thorough-paced Christians. How few are there, that make Conscience of curbing their passions, of being concern'd for the sins of others, of giving Alms according to their ability, of speaking Truth, when they are in danger of losing something by the Truth, of obeying God more than Men, of being more careful to please the Creator than the Creature, of attention in a Sermon, of fixing their thoughts and affections upon God in Prayer, of ruminating upon what they hear, of doing good to them that hate them? &c. Neglects of such Duties

pals for Peccadillo's, and cunning frauds, dissimulations, officious lyes, false warrantings, secret over-reachings, mincings of Oaths, telling of unchaste passages, churlish behaviour, unkindness to enemies, revenge of Injuries, hatred of a Brother, adulation, flattery, laughing at good counsel, slighting of Fraternal correption, wanton Songs, scoffings at Ministers, rash censuring and judging, and contempt of others, or pride in Cloaths, Patching or Painting, talking extravagantly over a Cup of Wine, sleeping at Church, and carlesness in devotion, are Sins, which few people take notice of, looking upon them as offences of the smaller size, and as things easily pardoned, as they think, by Him, who delights not in the death of a Sinner.

But, Sirs, as little, as these and other Sins may seem in your eyes, we have a Commission from the Almighty, to tell you, that you cannot be Christians, except you exercise your watchfulness against all those sins, which the World is pleased to call by other names, than the Holy one of *Israel* is pleased to put upon them. A Christian hath Vow'd to strive against all sin, whether great or smal'. This Oath of God is upon you, and

and in your Baptism, so much you promised, and so much you have since confirm'd, by approving that your solemn Initiation, or Introduction into the visible Church of *Christ*. Will ye be false to your Promise? Will ye break your Vow? Will ye Abjure, what then you gave your consent to? Deceive not your selves, these sins are not little ones, you onely call them so, that you may more freely commit them, and that your hearts may not smite you for them; You mistrust, they may provoke the Almighty to anger, and that you may not be discompos'd with the thoughts of Gods Indignation, you look upon them as trifles. Such sins formerly were no little sins, when men were better Christians, than now they are; it's onely the great Debauchery, and Viciousness of the age, we live in, that makes them so; But shall this Age prescribe Rules to God to govern himself by? Shall the Wickedness of the Times oblige God to condescend to Mens Impiety, and in Complaisance to their Folly, cause him to make no more of their sins, than they are pleased to do? Shall Men, wilfully blind, tell the Almighty what colour their sins are of, or how he must interpret

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pret them, that searches the heart, and the reins ?

Can any sin be little that is committed against an Infinite Majesty ? Can any Affront be small that's levell'd against him, whose Brightness dazles the eyes of Angels ? If it were not against a Law of God, it could not be sin ; but is not the same Authority to be seen in the least Precept, as well as the greatest ? Doth one God give the greater, and another the lesser Injunctions ? And if the same God be slighted in the greater and lesser Laws, will not the same God find a time to lash the boldness of the offender ?

How is it possible you can love God, while you do not exercise your selves in rooting out of these lesser sins ? Can you love God and fight against him ? Can you be enamoured with him, and affront his Holiness ? Can you tell us a way, how to reconcile Gods Purity with your Uncleanness ? you cannot but be sensible that these (you call) lesser sins offend him, and is this your love to him, to disobey him ? Is this your affection to him, to do what you know will cross his Will and Pleasure ? Is this your respect to him, to disoblige him in things he

he intends for your eternal Welfare? Let the sin be never so small, you do allow your selves in, while you willingly indulge your selves in it, it looses the name of an Infirmitie, and passes for Enmity in the sight of Heaven, and it's impossible that Love to God, and wilful sins should ever consist together. Do you believe, that Servant loves you, to whom you have spoken often to do some small thing about you, and yet with all your Entreaties, and CARESSES you cannot oblige him to gratifie you in that particular? Would you have God believe you, that you love him, when you are loath to do whatsoever he commands you? If love to God does not make you ready unto every good work, it is not Love but Hypocrisie; love will make things easie, and did you love God with sincerity, you would not leave a Circumstance undone, if you knew that he had enjoyned it.

Why should you cheat your selves? Why should you delude your selves in a thing so palpable? Whatever you may imagine, these lesser sins are but Baits to lead you on to greater. The *Per-  
fians* at this day are great takers of *Opi-  
um*, and first they take no more than

the

*Perf Trav.  
15. c.17.*

## The Best Exercise.

the head of a Pin, increasing their Dose by degrees, till they come to take the quantity of half a Nutmeg; when they are come to that pitch, they dare not give over, for fear of endangering their Lives: a true Emblem of those sins, the World calls little and inconsiderable. The lesser Doses, like small Wedges widen the Cleft, and are preparatives for greater, and invite men to take a larger proportion, till at last it becomes dangerous to cashier and part with them, and thus by little and little men sink into the Gulf.

2 Kings 8:13.

As much as *Hazaell* abhor'd the Villanies *Elisha* spoke of, the little sins he then lived in, brought him at last to that monstrous Iniquity, he at first trembled at. *Judas* lookt upon Covetousness, as an inconsiderable sin, and made no great matter of it, but it brought him at last to Treason. Strange that you should not see the Danger! Nay you cannot promise your selves Gods preventing, or restraining Grace to preserve you from falling into greater sins, while you continue in the lesser; For by these lesser sins, you drive away Gods Spirit, bring a Consumption on your Graces, and thrust the Almighty away from you.

If

If he do keep you from greater enormities, it is his superabundant Mercy, and Goodness, but you cannot reckon upon't, you cannot be sure of it, you do enough to make him take away his Spirit, the Prop that must support you, and if that be gone, the House must fall, and great must be its ruine. If God depart from you, you are left to the malice of the Devil, and he'll be sure so to manage those lesser sins in you, that they shall advance into hideous Offences, and so water the Tares, that are scattered up and down in your Souls, that the whole Field in time shall be over-run with them, and the water that comes but to the Ancles now, shall ere long come up to the Knees, to the Neck, and to the Head, and drown you.

Bitterness, and Wrath, and Anger, and Clamour, and evil speaking and Malice, How little do Men make of these Sins? yet they grieve the holy Spirit of God, by the Apostles Verdict, *Eph. 4. 30. 31. And do you thus reward this Spirit of Love?* Hath he deserved no better dealings at your hands? Is this the recompence, you give him for all the kind motions, and whispers he hath followed you withal?

Doth

Doth not reason tell you, that many little sins, amount to a great one ? suppose, you are not guilty of Adultery, yet if the many wanton thoughts , and unclean desires of your minds, were laid in the Ballance with it , Would they not weigh as heavy , as the greater sin ? Suppose, you are not guilty of Murther, yet will not the many secret grudges, and clandestine contrivances against your Neighbour , tantamount to that Crime ? Is it not all one, whether one *Goliath*, or a Thousand *Philistines* overcome you ? Thou art no Thief, no Robber ; but, Will not thy many covetous wishes make up a Robbery ? Were all thy idle words laid together , How much would they want of Blasphemy ? Thou art no Drunkard ; but were thy frequent abuses of Gods Creatures sum'd up , thou wouldest go near to put down *Nabal* for Drunkenness. The less any sins are , the more numerous are they commonly ; and small Birds , by their number, may do as much mischief, as one Kite , or Eagle ; and who knows not , that *Ægypt* suffered more by the most contemptible Creatures, then by the Greater Artillery of Heaven ?

Tell me of any one sin , that *Christ* hath

hath not dy'd for ; if the very least sin did help towards his death , and Crucifixion , Why should not Mortification of little sins be one great part of your Exercise ? Can you remember , that these had a hand in that Murther , and can you hug these Enemies in your Bosoms ? Can you remember, that these, as well as the greater Crimes of Mankind, sharpen'd the Nails , and Spear , and Thorns , that wounded him, and with a Kiss, more Treacherous, then that of Judas , salute these Foes ? Did Christ find, even your unsavory Speeches, your looser Gestures, your obscene Expressions, your Carnal Thoughts heavy ? Did even these help to crush him under the burthen of Gods Anger, and do you make sport with them?

While you indulge your selves in these lesser sins , you run into greater danger , then if you committed more fearful Iniquities ; for there may be some hopes , that a gross sin may startle a Man , and fright him into Repentance ; but while he makes light of little sins, he never repents of them , goes on in them , and gathers a great many sticks together , that make up his burning pile. Little sins become great ones, when they  
are

*The Best Exercise.*

are justified as harmless ; The defence aggravates the error , and remorseless continuance in them , makes their dye all Scarlet. What makes so many Hypocrites in the Christian Church , but this insensibleness of lesser sins ? These hinder men from going on from virtue to virtue , and like a Moth eat away the beauty and splendour of their virtues. Indeed , while you go on in these little sins , you cannot rationally suppose , that your Names are written among the *Candidates* of Heaven ; for Conversion makes the Soul cautious , even of the appearance of sin : and he is yet a stranger to the work of Grace , that hath not learn'd to avoid the occasions of Evil ; and he certainly begins at the wrong end , that begins to subdue his obduracy , and hardness in sin , by suppressing the outward act ; for it is the evil thought , that causes delight , delight consent , consent action , action habit , habit custom , custom perseverance , and perseverance hardness ; therefore he , that means to crush the corruption , must begin at the little sin , the evil thought , or else he doth but beat the air , and like the Boy in the story , that thought to pour out the Sea into a Nut-shell , attempt impossibilities.

Christi-

Christians, The Day will come, when every thing shall be called by its proper name, and O how will you be surprized, when the sins, you look'd upon as inconsiderable, and unworthy of your deep repentance, and circumspection, shall be represented in Magnifying-Glasses, and appear as they are indeed, dreadful and terrible! *Wo to them that call evil good, and good evil*, saith God, Esai. 5. 20. a threatening pronounced not onely against such as give Vertue the name of Vice, and Vice the name of Vertue, but such also, as make of great sins, little ones, and of little ones none at all. This was the trade of the Pharisees, and what serious Man can read the Judgments denounced against them by the Son of God, and not be afraid of being guilty of their Error? *Depart, I pray you, from the Tents of these wicked Men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins*, cry'd Moses to the Children of Israel, in the case of Korah, Numb. 16. 26. A Watch-word, I may give unto every one of you; Do you know, what terrour, what anguish, what plagues our Great Master hath threatned the Pharisees for their dis-regarding of little sins, and will you par-ticipate of their ruine?

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Come

Come, Christians, believe the Word of God, before your deceitful hearts : That will tell you, what is offensive to God, and shew you, that even the least sin, deserves tears more than laughter, and sorrow more than mirth, and diversion : That will tell you, that even these *Children of Edom* must be dash'd against the stones, if you would have peace within ; and that *as dead Flies cause the Ointment of the Apothecary to send forth a stinking savour, so doth a little Folly him that is in reputation for Wisdom, and Honour*, Ecclesi. 10. 1. That will tell you, that a little Leaven, leavens the whole lump, and the onely way not to be under a temptation of sitting down in the scorners Chair, is, not to walk in the *counsel of the ungodly*. And to this purpose *Barlaam in Damascene* advises his Convert *Josaphat* ; Before all things , in stor. l. 15. this exercise thy self, even in the sedulous destruction of all thy evil thoughts , that nobler conceptions may enter into thy mind, and thy Soul may become a habitation of the Holy Ghost : for from thoughts, we come to actions ; and whatever work we undertake, it hath its rise in our minds ; and as small as its beginning seems to be, by degrees it grows bigger, and by silent steps swells

Vincent.  
Specul.Hi-  
stor. l. 15.

swells to a vast magnitude: And for this cause let no evil custom exercise dominion over thee, but while the shrub of sin is young, and tender, pull up the little root, lest being grown strong, and lusty, it be past thy skill to eradicate it: for from hence it is, that greater sins get access to our hearts, because we apply no early remedy to the lesser errors, such, as are roving thoughts, immodest speeches, and evil conferences; and as it is in wounded Bodies, if the slighter hurts, and bruises be neglected, the wound festers, and gathers corruption, and many times brings on death, and excessive torments, so he that's careless of little sins, calls for greater to attend him.

Christians, There is not one Soul in Heaven now, but what watch'd against such little sins, when they sojourned here; and if they did not mind them for some time, yet they were forced to repent of them, and to subdue, and leave them, before ever they saw the face of God in Glory. If this Heaven be worth your care, if this Glory be worth your pains, if this Everlasting Rest be worth your endeavours, O say not of any sin, as Lot of Zoar, *Is it not a little one, and my Soul shall live?* You may as well say, I will break my Neck a little, and I will

Gen. 19.22

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cut

*The Best Exercise.*

cut my Throat a little, and I will burn my self in Hell a little, as harbour the smallest sin. O tremble at any thing that looks like it ; Beware of *these Foxes*,  
 Can. 2. 15. *these little Foxes that spoil the Vines* ; Trust not these Vermin, but destroy them utterly ; This is the way to keep your Garments white, and to fit your selves for the Wedding of the Lamb, and for those Mansions, at which no unclean thing must enter.

Learn to die to the World ; for it's your fondness to that, which blinds you, dulls you, darkens your Understanding, and perverts your Affections, raises clouds and mists before your eyes, that you cannot see your duty, or your sins, and eclipses the light of your minds, that you can discern nothing, but grosser offences ; if you would have that Sun shine out clearly, you must not suffer this Moon to interpose between your sight, and it : This Moon is your love to the World, which will put other constructions, other interpretations on your sins, than your naked Reason would do. Set the Goodness of God before you, Reflect much on his Favours, Ruminante upon his Mercies ; The Divine Goodness is of a melting, constraining nature, and the more lively you

re-

represent it to your minds, the more it will compel you to part even with the least transgression. Fancy you hear God pleading with you, *Sinner*, *What Iniquity hast thou found in me? Thou owest thy Life and Being to me, and all the Blessings thou hast, are mine: Canst thou be so unkind, so inhumane, so ingrateful, as not to crucifie so small a sin for my sake?* If I should withdraw my presence from thee, take away all, I have given thee, wouldst not thou complain, and mourn? But what mean these Provocations? Why dost thou compel me to cast thee off? Look back, and see whom thou dost offend by these, thou callest little sins. It is thy greatest Benefactor, and is not he worth pleasing, that hath greater things in store to bestow upon thee, if the favours he hath already shewred down upon thee, can make thee intirely his? Think you hear such a Voice behind you. Compare your losses with your gains. Your little sins are commonly your gainful sins: they are sins, wherein your carnal ease, and the satisfaction of your sensual appetite is concerned: but grant, you get that sensual satisfaction you wish for, by these sins, will it countervail the loss of God's Grace, the loss of the light of his Countenance, the loss of spiritual

comforts, the loss of inward joy, the loss of Communion with your Maker : all which you do certainly lose by your affection to these sins. Where is your Christian Perfection, if you watch not against the least sin? How do you put on the whole Armour of God, if you arm not your selves against these common Souldiers of the Devils Army? It is not the Officers, the Captains of his Hellish Host, I mean the greater sins alone, that endanger you; These *Gibeonites*, that seem inconsiderable, that come with Clouts upon their feet, and look, as if they would do no great harm, these lesser sins, are as big with mischief, as the other, for their design is the same, *viz.* to engage you in a League with Hell, in a Covenant with Death, and to lay you open to the fiercest assaults of the Devil. In a word, if you would be rid of the least sin, learn to live by Rule, think by Rule, and speak by Rule, and work by Rule, even by the Rule of the Word of the Living God; *And as many as walk according to this Rule, peace be on them, and on the whole Israel of God.*

### VII. Exercise.

*Every day to keep a strict Guard over our*

our Eyes; an exercise recommended to us, *Job* 31. 1. *Psalm* 119. 37. *Matth.* 5. 28, 29. *Matth.* 18. 9. By the eye here, I do not mean the eye of *Contemplation*, whereby Men see, what is above them; nor the eye of *Reason*, whereby they see, what is within them; but the Eye of the *Body*, which discovers to them the things, that are without them; and what necessity there is for guarding the Eye, the unhappy examples of persons, who have been lost for want of it, do sufficiently shew. When our Grandmother *Eve* suf- Gen: 3. 6. fer'd her Eyes to wander on the Forbid-den Tree, and pleas'd her sight with the lovely, but dangerous Fruit, we know, and feel to this day, what was the effect of it, even the undoing of all her Post-  
ri-ty. Had *Dinah*, the Daughter of *Ja- Gen: 34. 1. cob*, kept within the limits of her Fathers House, and not gadded abroad, to see fashions, and the wanton behaviour of the Daughters of the Land, she had not lost her Virginity, nor been the occasion of so much Bloud-shed. Had the *Jews* Numb. 25. forbore looking on the Daughters of *Mi- 1, 2. dian*, they had prevented the plague, which broke in upon them, and consu-med the chosen Men of *Israel*. Had *Da- 2 Sam. 11. vid* turned away his eyes from *Bathsheba*, 2.

when he walked on the Plat-form of his House , neither *Uriah* had been killed, nor himself fallen into that distress , and anguish , which afterwards came upon *Achan* loses his life by his Eyes, 2 Sam 13, and *Ammon* commits incest. *Haman's Eyes* taking notice of *Mordecai's* irreverence, occasions his death : And had the *Elders* in the Story , when they admired the Beauty of *Susanna*, look'd another way, they had prevented their shameful, and ignominious execution. At these Windows Covetousness , and Lasciviousness, Clem. A- and admiration of sensual Objects , and Iex.Pædag. Envy, enters ; at these Avenues they come in, and from these Gates the poison is convey'd to the Heart , and Entrails. At these Doors grief comes in , which racks the mind , and tears the bowels : for who knows not, that it is more tolerable to hear, than to see a loss , or misfortune ? Did not the Covetous feed his eyes with the sight of Gold ; he would not forsake *Paradice* for *Sodom*, *Heaven* for *Earth*, and *God* for *Mammon*. Did the lustful person deny himself, in seeing the tempting Object, he would not become a slave to his passion, nor stoop to such a fatal servitude, as we see he doth, it's gazing on the πολλὴ φαντασία, on the gaudes

*Qui viderit, peccat, te non fortuna? Did not the Covetous feed his eyes with the sight of Gold; he would not forsake Paradice for Sodom, Heaven for Earth, and God for Mammon. Did the lustful person deny himself, in seeing the tempting Object, he would not become a slave to his passion, nor stoop to such a fatal servitude, as we see he doth, it's gazing on the πολλὴ φαντασία, on the gaudes*

*vid. &c. Casp. Barth. in notis as Claudian.*

gaudes and glories of this World, makes the sensual man admire nothing, but what savours of satisfaction of the Flesh. Did not the envious cast his eyes on his neighbours welfare, it would not grieve him to see his equal or inferiour thrive and prosper. The Mother that looks upon her dying Babe, by that look, increases her grief, and he that sees himself despised and wrong'd, makes that spectacle an argument of his immoderate sorrow and vexation, so that guarding the eyes is an Exercise, which Duty, Interest, and Desire of our own quiet doth command.

This Exercise consists, *First*, In admiring nothing in the Creature, but the Creators Glory. *Secondly*, In turning away our Eyes from any Object, which we have reason to suspect, as dangerous. *Thirdly*, In checking the disorder which our seeing may cause in our Minds and Passions. *Fourthly*, In making greater use of the Eyes of our Minds, than of our Bodies.

1. In admiring nothing in the Creature, but the Creators Glory; what Beauty, what Harmony, what Evenness, what Exactness, what Perfection, we see in any

Ἐτ τοι τὸ τέλος  
πρᾶξις οὐκ  
ἴστορες φα-  
ντάσεις προ-  
τεῖ τοι τοῦ στόλου  
γενεμένα,  
σχέδιον εἰ-  
δίνει καὶ δέξεται  
αὐτῷ, καὶ τὴν καταπλεύσιον συμβανόντων οὐδὲ Θεού ποτε διασυνιστάται, Οὐτοί τοι  
γέρεις οὐ γένεται θεού αἰκαλία πάτηται, καὶ τοῦ πεντελίκου ἐπαπρέπειν τοὺς ιατρούς συν-  
εργούν οὐδεπολ μείς εἰσεν δυνιστας, M. Antonin. Lib. 3. Sect. 2.

object,

object, that must immediately lead us to admire the Supreme Cause, that gave it Being: His Finger must be taken notice of, His Wisdom magnified, His Bounty adored, His Power praised, His Munificence exalted, and the Creature only look'd upon, as the work of his hands, the effect of his Providence, and the product of his Goodness: He that looks no farther, than the Creature, runs himself into snares, and God justly suffers him to fall, that would not look higher, and from Earth cast up his eyes to Heaven. Such a man looks no farther than a Beast, and forgets that God gave him a faculty to see more than irrational Animals; such a man hath nothing to keep him in awe, and therefore is tempted to lay hold on the forbidden Tree, which was onely presented to his Eyes by way of Tryal: He that upon seeing the Loveliness and Beauty of a sub-lunary Object, presently reflects on the God that made it; at the same time, furnishes himself with Arguments to keep within the bounds of Seeing, and within the borders of Virtue; for sure he cannot at the same time admire the Creator, and sin against him; That reflexion will put a stop to his sensual desires, and as the Angel did *Balaam*, suffer him not to

go

go on to the King of *Moab*, I mean, to fulfil the suggestions of a brutish Appetite.

2. In turning away our Eyes from any Object, which we have reason to suspect, as dangerous. There is no man, that observes himself, and knows, what sins and errors, he is most prone and inclined to, but must needs, or at least may know, what objects are most likely to raise disorders in his Soul; Experience hath taught him, and his frequent falls have been his School-masters. Such objects must be shunn'd, as the Pestilence, and if they come within sight, the Eyes must be cast down on the ground, or shut; and as ridiculous, as this may seem in the eyes of the world, a man in this case had better be laugh'd at by all his acquaintance, than loose the Glory of his Self-denial. There is no dallying with such objects. To see whether I am able to resist the Temptation, is to sin for Tryal's sake, and he is certainly safer, that looks another way. Our greatest wisdom, is to suspect our own frailty, and the best way to keep Sin out of the mind is to keep it out of the Eyes. (a) What Sin we have formerly fallen into, we may fall into again, and he that knows not but he may

χρονίαν γετάσεις την πόλην, η σίκανα την το ον Χαππίδη Ιωντός, Porphyri. de abstин. I. 1. Sect. 33.

had

had best put himself out of all danger, and that is, by not looking upon the enticing object, and though it is not necessary to run away from it in great fury, as *Paulus* in (b) *Cassian* did from the sight of a Woman ; yet it's expedient to get as fast as we can from the confines of that Fire, which is so apt to put our passions into a Fever.

(b) *Cassian*  
Collat. 7.  
c. 27.

3. In checking the least disorder, which our Seeing may cause in our Minds and Passions. It's possible, we may be surpriz'd, and the Object, we behold unawares, may dart a covetous, or envious, or lascivious thought into our Minds ; and that spark may fall upon the passions ; but here the poison must be presently vomited up again, and the seed of evil dissipated, and our Souls clear'd of the dangerous guest ; the sudden thought drown'd in the waters of Repentance ; and greater cautiousness for the future must be used, and the Child thus burnt must learn to dread the fire ; where this is neglected, and men are careless of this Exercise, their Souls are in danger of being consumed, for those sparks, if let alone, will soon put all into a doleful conflagration, so necessary is it to resist the beginnings of these impurer steams and exhalations, and the Vipers bite can do no great harm,

harm, if something be applied presently to stop the inflammation. The first disorder is soon check'd, when the greater tumult cannot be quell'd or allay'd, but with very great pains and difficulty.

4. In making greater use of the eyes of our Minds, than those of our Bodies, *Matth. 6. 22.* When St. *Anthony* the Hermit had a mind to comfort the Excellent, but blind *Dydimus* of *Alexandria*, he thus addressed himself to him. *Let it not trouble thee, that thou hast lost thy outward or carnal eyes, for in being deprived of them, thou wantest onely such eyes, as Mice and Flies, and Lizards have, but rejoice that thou hast eyes of Angels, whereby God is seen, and a vast light of knowledge is kindled in thy Soul.* Indeed, were these Eyes but exercised more, those of the Body, would have no such evil influence upon the Soul. The intellectual Eye looks beyond the Clouds, transcends the Sky, and sees through all the Mists and Foggs of this present World, into Eternity. This beholds the satisfactions of another World, and surveys the Treasure, God hath laid up for them, that fear him; This sees the Goodness of God, and causes otherguise Delights, than the Butterflies, and Glow-worms of Earthly Glories

Ruffi Hist. lib. 2 c. 7.

ries do. This looks up to the everlasting Hills, and as the Eyes of Servants look unto the hands of their Masters ; and as the Eyes of a Maiden, look unto the hand of her Mistress : so this waits upon the King of Heaven, till he is pleased to answer in the still voice of Love and Mercy. This scorns to stoop so low, as to see what Swine and Moles do here on Earth, and takes a view of Gods Paradise , and of the blessed Shades, under which, the Heirs of Glory rest without Disturbance, or Molestation ; and he that sees with this Eye, opens this often , and delights to behold Objects, suitable and agreeable to its sublime , and wonderful Fabrick, doth stupifie the pleasures, his corporal eyes suggest , and so qualifies them, that they make no more impression, than Arrows shot against a brazen Wall or Fortress made of Iron. In these particulars, this Exercise consisls , and this is it we presse upon you , this is it we exhort you to, and entreat you to employ your selves in, as you would not bear the name of Christians in vain.

We do not bid you with *Eusebius*, in *Theodore*, to shut your eyes against the Flowers of the Field, or against the Stars of Heaven, and to put weights of Iron about

about your Necks, to keep your Eyes fixed upon the ground ; we do not perswade you with *Pachomius*, so to tye your selves up from the sight of all Mankind, as not to look upon so near a Relation, as a Sister : *Simeon Stylita*, and *Theodorus* would not see their own Mothers ; *John the Hermit*, for Fifty years together, saw none of the Female Sex ; one *Sarab* lived Threescore years by a River, and never look'd upon it ; one *Marcus* saluted his Mother, and one *Pior* his Sister with their Eyes shut ; *Sylvanus* on Mount *Sinai*, was so afraid of having his mind distracted with vain thoughts, that he would not so much as look upon the Trees, that grew in a Garden before him : but such superstitious doings we do not set before you, as patterns to imitate, but the thing we would have you learn to be masters of, is a modesty of the eyes, a serious Look, and a care of your Senses, that you may not look upon any thing, that's like to breed vain thoughts in your Understanding ; your Eyes are Sacred things. The Egyptians represented God by them, and the Type should ever answer to the Antitype ; As God  
Oculi per &  
in oculis per &  
magis in oculis per &  
spiritu, &  
in glaucobericis,  
ajebat Diogenes Didymoni mæcho, medico, cum curaret Virginis oculum, in Lerr. lib. 6. de Diog.

there-

therefore is Holy, so should the Eye be, that represents him. Would you know what makes your Mind so frothy, and your Souls so weary of Gods Service; Why, your Eye is never weary of seeing objects that feed your sensuality; What is it makes you so averse from reading Books, that Treat of God and Happiness? Why, your eyes delighting so much in reading Romances, and Play-Books. What damps or dulls your admiration of Gods Providences? Why? your eyes being so much taken with vain shews and representations. What makes you that you are no more enamour'd with him, that's altogether lovely? Why? your eyes are so entirely fixed on the Flesh, and on the World; How should you love that, which you see but seldom? How should you hunger and thirst after that, which you care not, how rarely you cast your eyes upon? you fancy, Religion doth not reach so far as the eyes, and think that God hath given you eyes on purpose, to look on all things that are visible, you are not aware of the Serpent, that lies in the grass you look upon, and all is harmless to you, that comes within the verge of sight; but these are not thoughts of Men, that have learn'd Christ; these  
are

are not reasonings of Men, that have laid up their portion in another World; this is the sense of Men, that grovel in Dust, and know not, what it means to walk after the Spirit: your God, that knows your frame, would never have made a Law to regulate the Sight, but that he knew, that was the hole, at which the Scorpions creep in, that prey upon the Soul. Stop up this Fountain, and you need not fear its fatal Rivulets; God knew it was the quickest sense, and therefore wisely ordered us to make a hedge about it, that Thieves might not break in; He that stands Centry here, keeps his Castle safe, preserves the Purity of his Soul, keeps up his Virgin innocence, and truly enjoys himself; from the guarding of this sense, the Soul comes to taste, what inward pleasure means, and can silently rejoice in her Watchfulness and Victory; This lifts her up above her self, and makes her triumph in her Conquest, and watching thus she advances her Glory into a Kingdom, Reigns within her self, and makes her Lusts come crouching to her Throne, or overaw'd with her Majesty, creep away into Dens and Darkness.

This hath been the care of Saints in

*Ideo huma-  
ni generis  
Creator &  
Conditor  
Deus op-  
ificii sui na-  
turam p̄e  
omnibus e-  
mendatio-  
nemque co-  
gnoscens, il-  
lic curam  
adhibuit  
medicine,  
unde cau-  
tas morbi  
principali-  
ter noverat  
emanare.  
Cassian.In-  
stitut. lib.  
6. c. 12.*

all ages, and this hath made their memory famous. This Exercise the ancient Fathers press'd, and upon such Sermons, the wanton world began to be reform'd; This made the Virgins cover their Faces with Vails, that they might neither tempt others with their Beauty, nor be tempted with the comely Looks of their Spectators; This made the world take notice of the holy Looks of Christians, and observe, how with their Lives and Conversations, the motions of their eyes, and all their gestures changed: The man, whose eyes did rove before on every Female he met withal, upon his turning to God, fix'd them on the ground, or on Hell, which he thought he had deserved; The quickness of their eyes was lost with their Sins, and the wantonness of their Looks, expired with their Viciousness and Debaucheries. They consider'd, that their reason was given them to govern their Senses, and they justly thought that in vain they pretended to a life of Reason and Religion, without they subdued their Senses, and fenced all those passages, where Sin and Folly used to enter. This gave Religion credit, and made Men come from the *East*, and *West* to gaze upon it. This made the

*Athenagor.  
legat. pro  
Christ.*

the world wonder to see Humane Nature rise so high , and come to that pitch of Sanctity, which even the *Heathen Gods* had been strangers to.

He that thus guards his Eyes, is the man that sees, whereas the other , that walks in the sight of his eyes , is blind ; and let him remember, that even for his Looks, God shall one day call him to judgment, Eccles. 11. 9. They were excellent Arguments, Seneca gave to him, that had lost his Eyes ; Thou complainest, saith he, *I have lost mine eyes ; even this darkness bath its pleasure ; Lost thine eyes ? what great matter hast thou lost ? How many base and filthy Lusts croud the way thou walkest in ? Thou art happy, for thou wilt want abundance of things, which were worth pulling out thine eyes , that thou mightst not see them : Thou considerest not, that Blindness is a spice of Innocence ; Alas ! what are the eyes ? such a man they prompt to adultery, another they entice to unnatural copulation ; another they tempt to covet his neighbours House ; another they put upon laying Siege to a City ; another they seduce into all manner of misery ; so that in loosing thine eyes, thou hast lost nothing else, but incentives to Vice , and ringleaders of iniquity.* Indeed, without a man

learns to guard this fence, it had been better for him, that he had never seen the Sun, or that he had lost his eyes, as soon as he came into the world, for that misfortune would yet have quickned the eyes of his understanding, and help'd him with *Moses*, to look upon him that is invisible, by the eye of Faith, and at last he might have obtained the end of his Faith, even the salvation of his Soul; whereas, by his unhappy seeing, he besots himself, falls in love with the World; hugs the pleasures of Sin for a season, fancies no satisfaction like that, which gratifies his fence, and so remains a stranger to peace of Conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost; till with *Dives*, he lifts up his eyes in Hell, and sees *Abraham* afar off, and *Lazarus* in his bosom, and finds by sad experience, what he has lost and slighted.

Plutarch  
Pericl. &  
Cicer. Of.  
fic. I. 1.

It was worthily said of *Pericles*, when *Sophocles* his companion, shew'd him an extraordinary Beauty, and seem'd to be taken with it, *It is not enough to keep clean hands, Oh Sophocles, but you must keep your eyes clean too.* Though he was a Heathen, yet in this, he spoke like a Christian, and conformably to our Religion, which bids us keep both the outside

sive and the inside clean; and indeed there can be no purity of heart, without purity of the senses; and to this purpose there is an excellent Discourse in St. Jerome, or whoever be the Author of the Comment upon the *Lamentations*, to be found in St. Jerome's Works: *Let's not look upon that, which we are forbid to lust after; That the mind may be preserved pure, the Eyes must be press'd down, as Slaves, that ravish Men to sin. If the Mother of the living by her Eyes procured her own death, we ought to consider, how necessary it is to take our eyes into custody:* Mine Eye hath robb'd my Heart, saith Lament. 3. the Prophet; for coveting after things visible, it lost its invisible Virtues: He that loses his sense of God within, suffers the Eye of his Body to commit Robbery in his Heart: Therefore, if we would be Masters of our Hearts, let's be Masters of our Senses too; for though the Mind be never so grave, yet the Childish Senses of the Body make so fearful a noise sometimes, that if they be not overpower'd by the weight of Reason, and with a juvenile kind of heat restrain'd, they'll render the Mind effeminate, and feeble.

## VIII Exercise.

Every day as there shall be occasion, to make good use of the Virtues, and Vices of our Neighbours, or those that have lived before us, and whose Actions we have either read, or heard of; an Exercise commanded, Luk. 13. 2, 3. 1 Cor. 10. 6. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. Rom. 15. 4. The Chaldee Paraphraſt upon the 34th Chapter of Deuteronomy tells us, God taught us to cloath the Naked, when he made Adam, and Eve Coats of Skin, and cloathed them: And taught us to Marry in the Lord, and in the fear of God, when he joyn'd them two together: And taught us to visit the Sick, when he revealed himself to Abraham, being sore with the Circumcision of his Flesh: And taught us to comfort those that mourn, when he manifested himself to Jacob, coming back from Padan, in the place, where his Mother died: And taught us to feed the Poor, when he sent Bread to the Children of Israel from Heaven: And taught us to bary the Dead, when himself was pleased to bury Moses, the Man of God, and charge his holy Angels to attend his Corpse to the place of his Interrement, over against Beth-Peor, to the Confusion of that Idol. So far the Interpreter, though a Jew, is in the

the right : But this is not all, not onely God's actions , but the actions of our Neighbours must be improved to our spiritual profit , and advantage. And this Exercise consists partly in imitating the good actions , partly in shunning the bad, or such as we have reason to suspect asevil, and contrary to the Will of God.

1. In imitating the good ; *Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of a good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, where-ever you see it, in whom-fover you meet with it, whether in a Jew, or Heathen, or Christian, think on these things, and imitate them,* saith the Apostle of the Gentiles, *Phil. 4. 8.* Such a Christian is eminent for his meeknes, another eminent for patience, a third eminent for peaceableness, a fourth eminent for modesty, a fifth eminent for charity, a sixth for humility, a seventh for spiritual joy, another for self-denial, another for temperance, another for pardoning of injuries, &c. To look upon these patterns is not enough, but then we exercise our selves to Godliness , when we reason our selves into imitation, some c. 3.

Onibus,  
ad quos stu-  
diō discedē-  
pergebat,  
obedientis,  
proprias  
singulorū  
gratiis  
huius conti-  
nentiam, pa-  
cunditatem  
illius se la-  
batur, illius  
teritatem,  
illius zigi-  
lantiam, al-  
terius te-  
gendi emu-  
tabatur in-  
dustriam,  
&c. St. A-  
thanai.  
Vit. Anton.

such way as this, How lovely is this Virtue! How amiable this temper! How beautiful this gift! How great a commendation is it to this Man, to be so qualified! What content must it cause in him to be so gracious, so favoured of God, and so well dispos'd! What should hinder me from following him? Why should not I tread in his steps? Why should not his practice kindle in me desires, to arrive to the same happiness? Could he be Master of this Grace, and why cannot I? Is not the same God alive, the same Spirit ready to assist me? Have not I the same means of Grace to help me? Suppose my condition is not the same with his, yet is there any condition, which a Man may not, or is not obliged to be good in?

If I go among the Turks, I shall see Tavern.  
Descr. Se- the highest, as well as the lowest, the  
ragl c. 16. Emperour, as well as the meanest Subject,  
rise by break of day to praise God. If

Leo deMo-  
den. Ce-  
rem. Jud.  
p, 38.

I go among the Jews, I shall find, that they will begin no Work, do nothing about their Houses, nothing of busines, till they have been at their Prayers. If I go among the Heathen, I shall find, that though their Goods, and Houses, and all they have, and their Lives to boot,

## The Best Exercise.

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boot, were in danger, they would not break off in the midst of the service of their Gods, but stay till they have done. Can I imagine, that these examples are represented to me, without a Providence? Can I imagine, that these are no Invitations to convert those good customs into practice? Is not this Call enough to baptize them, and to adopt them into Christianity? Shall a Heathen, a Turk, a Jew, out-do me in Holiness? If they do, Shall not *the Queen of the South* rise Matth. 12. against me in the day of Judgment, and <sup>42.</sup> condemn me, who came from the farthest parts of the Earth to hear the Wisdom of Solomon, but a greater than Solomon is here?

In the same manner, if I read the Bible, and meet with excellent Endowments of Men, I am Idle, and lazie, and like that slothful Servant in the Gospel, hide my Talent in a Napkin; if reading of the Zeal of *Moses*, of the Contentedness of *Job*, of the Even Spirit of *David*, of the Stedfastness of *Daniel*, of the Constancy of *Shadrack*, *Meshech*, and *Abednego*, of the Faithfulness of *Samuel*, & *vita & oratio, &* *isfius animum ante te ferens, & vultum illum semper tibi ostende, vel custodem vel exemplum, opus est inquit alio pro ad quem mores nostri se ipsi exigant, nisi ad regulam, prava non corrigit, Senec. Epist. 11. Vid. & Ep. 6.*

of

of the Circumspection of *Enoch*, of the Early Piety of *Josiah*, of the Candour of *St. Paul*, of the Sincerity of *Nathaniel*, of the strong Faith of *Abraham*, of the Alms and Prayers of *Cornelius*, of the Fervency of *St. Peter*, of the Readiness of the *Berrheans* to receive the Word, of the *Taylor* at *Philippi* his Earnestness to be saved; I say, I wrong my Conscience if I do not force my self to follow these Examples. Indeed this is the end of God's setting these Examples before me, and except I make these Instances my Patterns, I read the Scripture unprofitably.

It's true, when the good actions I meet withal in Scripture, are peculiar to the place and office of the Saint, that wrought them, as the Prophet saying to the Man that met him, *Smite me, I pray thee*, 1 Reg. 20. 37. and the Apostles taking neither Gold nor Silver in their Pockets, when they went to preach the Gospel; and shaking off the dust of their feet against that House, that would not receive them; and where the actions of holy Men recorded there, have onely respect to the time they lived in, as Circumcision, and offering Sacrifices, and outward Purifications, things proper only for the Oeconomy

nomy of the Ritual Law, or where the actions of such pious Men are extraordinary and miraculous, as cleansing the Leper, raising the Dead, healing the Blind, where the good actions are of this nature, I am not bound to exercise my self so, as to study imitation; but all those actions, which they did in conformity to the Moral Law of God, and the Dictates of Nature, and the Rules, the Gospel prescribes to all Christians, there I am bound to look upon these Examples, as Voices from Heaven, to summon me to make that use of them, I have been mentioning. St. Austin is very confident <sup>Augusti. in</sup> of this, and adds, that the Examples of <sup>Psalm 119.</sup> Saints are those hot burning Coals, the Psalmist speaks of, *Psalm 120. 4.* whereby a deceitful Tongue may be burnt into a better temper. By these, saith he, God calls to us. *This Man could do so, and cannot you? Art thou more delicate, than such a Senatour? Art thou weaker than such a Woman? Art thou more afraid, than such a Mighty, and Wealthy Man? Could they do this, and cannot you? Could a Mary Magdalene weep, and cannot you? Could a Wealthy Zachæus confess his sin, and make restitution, and turn, and cannot you? Could a Paulus Sergius, a great* Com-

Commander, leave his Place and Dignity, to keep a good Conscience, and cannot you? Could a Centurion, a Captain, a Man of Arms, stoop to the humble Laws of the Gospel, and cannot you? Could they, that had greater Impediments than you have, embrace Christ's Yoak, and cannot you? Could they, that had more to plead for their refusall of God's Offers, than you, flight, and leave all, and follow Christ, and cannot you? Could they leave Lands, and Hous-es, and Father, and Mother, and Life it self, for the Gospel, and cannot you part with a Trifle for Heavens Glory? Did they think nothing too costly to part with for the Pearl of Price, and will not you quit one Lust, one darling bosom-Sin for it?

Nor is this onely to be observ'd in Scripture-passages, but in Civil Histories too. I may chance to read of the Admirable, and Heroick Acts of *Pagans*, and *Infidels*; of the Continence of *Scipio*, who being but Four and twenty years of Age, Young, Lively, and what is more, a Conquerour, and having

Valer. Max. Lib 4. c. 3. taken a young Lady Prisoner of noble Blood and wonderful Beauty, did not onely dismiss her to her Friends undefiled,

filed, but added the vast Sum of Money, brought for her Ransom, as an Augmentation of her Portion. I may light upon such an Example as that of *Curius*, who being presented with a great quantity of Gold by the *Samnites*, though poor, refused it, saying he had rather Rule over a Wealthy People, than be Wealthy and Rich himself; so I may read of the Moderation of *Metellus*, of the Constancy of *Phocion*, of the Sobriety of *Socrates*, of the Meekness of *Archytas*, of the Chastity of *Spurina*, of the Gratitude of *Massanisa*, of the Gravity of *Aristides*, of the Temperance of *Epicurus*, of the Patience of *Regulus*, of the Liberality of *Hiero*, &c. Even here I must not be a careless Reader of these Virtues, but make this inference from them; If these men arrived to such perfection by the light of Nature, what a shame and disgrace will it be to me, if assisted by the light both of Grace and Nature, I fall short of it.

2. The same Method must be observed in the Sins and Vices of others, whose Example must fright us from those sins, and stir up our hatred against them, and draw the same Language from us.

it did from *David*, Psal. 139. 21. *Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee, and am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee?* I must not see a Drunkenard, either in the Streets, or in a private House, without working my Soul into Detestation of his Bruitishnes : The Swearers Oath must fill me with Horror, and the Covetous Mans wishes have this happy effect upon me, as to set me against that damnable Iniquity. *Cains Despair* must make me shun the Sins that brought it, and *Lot's Incest* must fill me with wonder, how a Preacher of Righteousness could sink into such abominations. The *Sodomites* stubbornnes must melt me, and *Esaus Prophaneness* make me serious and humble. *Saul's Disobedience* must produce self-Resignation in me to the Will of God. And *Doeg's Treachery* must oblige me to Faithfulness ; *David's Adultery* must make me take heed, lest I fall, and *Solomon's Idolatry* make me suspect mine own Wildom. *Nebuchadnez-zar's Pride* must make me loath the Vice, and *Belshazzar's Luxury* make me tremble. *Judas his greedines* after Money must oblige me to a charitable Liberality, and I then read of *Demas's embracinc*

*Nequaquam avicula circuiverit granum, si alienum avenum in laqueo pendenter videtur; Tu ex aliorum dannis exemplum capito.* Saadi. Gulist p. m. 262.

bracing this present World , with some advantage, if it causes strong Resolutions in me to follow the Lamb , whether soever he goes. The *Pharisees* unbelief must make my Faith stronger , and the *Sadducees* denying a Resurrection must make me with care and earnestness prepare for it. The uncleanness of the *Nicolaitans* must make me Proclaim War against all unlawful Lusts , and the Angel of *Laodicea's* Lukewarmness must kindle such a Zeal in me, as will carry me beyond all Oppositions. *Sylla's* Cruelty must teach me to apply my self to Meekness, and *Annibal's* haughtiness teach me moderation in Prosperity. *Tatius* his Perfidiousness must lead me to sincerity, and *Cleopatra's* extravagance perswade me to Temperance. And this is to make Medicines of Poisons , and he that excels in this Art is a greater Physician than *Hippocrates*, and out-does *Galen* at his Weapon. Acting thus , we imitate Bees , which suck Honey even from stinking Flowers , and there is no Chymistry like that, which extracts good out of Evil , and Transforms the Devil himself into an Angel. Your Transimulations of Iron into Gold are nothing to this *Alchymie*, and all that the World hath

hath talk'd of the Philosophers Stone, falls short of this holy *Metamorphosis*. Let the sins of others attract sensual men into Delight and Compliance, a Christian must live above that sordid Condescension, and the Follies of his Neighbour, by a kind of *Antiperistasis*, must make the Fire of his Zeal against those Offences scorch the more, as their Virtues must make him grow in Grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord *Jesus Christ*.

This is your Work, my Friends, this is the Task the God of your Fathers hath set you. in this Race you are to run, the good Works of those you converse withal, or that you hear mentioned by others, you are to transcribe upon your lives. As Light doth naturally issue out from Fire, and Flowers send forth a delightful Fragrancy, so from the Light or Commemoration of holy mens Actions proceeds very great advantage and emolument, faith (a) St. *Basil*.

(a) *Homil. in Gord. mart.* This is to draw Pictures from Divine Images. Thus did the men, *Potitianus* spake of

(b) *Aug. Confess. Lib. 8. c. 6.* to (b) St. *Austin*; as they were walking forth to take the Air, they lighted upon a Cottage, where some very Religious persons lived, and taking a view  
of

of their Devotion, and manner of Conversation, and meeting with a History (a) *Habit unumquodque propositum* of a certain (a) holy Mans Life in one of the Rooms, they read it, and from these considerations were so transported, that (b) *Principes suos; Romanos; Duce imitentur, Camillos,* immediately they resolved to become friends of God, and Holiness, and so (b) *St. Basile professens of himself, When Fabricios, Scipiones, Philosophi proponant Pythagoram, Socratem, Platonom, Ariostolem, &c. Nos in Holy Labours, their vigour and constancy autem habemus in Prayer; when I observed, how neither conquer'd with sleep, nor overcome with the infirmities of their natures, they kept up, and maintain'd a lively sense of God, mocking both Hunger and Thirst, both Cold and Nakedness, as if they lived in another world, and their Souls dwell'd in a spiritual Body, and nothing would satisfie them, but bearing in their Bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus; I began to envy their happiness, and thought it long, till I attained to their felicity.*

It was the Jaylors taking notice of St. Paul and Silas, their praying and praising God at midnight, and their won-

wonderful Courage, and evennes of Mind in the midſt of their Chains, *Acts 16.29, 30.* That caused an Earthquake in his Soul, and made him reſtleſs, till they ſhew'd him a way to attain to thoſe Sweets and Delicacies of a conſcientious Life, which he ſaw they had experience of. We read of *Jacob*, *Gen. 30.37, 38, 39.* That he took him rods of Green Poplar, and of the Hazel and Chesnut, and pilled white ſtrakes in them, and made the white appear, which was in the rods, and he ſet the rods, which he had pilled before the Flocks in the Gutters, in the water-ing-troughs, when the Flocks came to drink, that they ſhould conceive when they came to drink; and the Flocks conceived before the Rods, and brought forth Cattle Ring-streaked, ſpeckled and ſpotted; What are theſe Rods, faith St. Gregory? and what is it to lay them before the Flock, but to ſet before us the Sayings and Actions of our pious Anceſtors, that we may be Regene- rated, that we may be Whiten'd, that we may bring forth ſuch Fruits, as they have born.

Gregor.  
Moral. lib.  
21. c. 1.

*Thy two Breasts are like to young Roes that are Twins, which feed among the Lilies*, faith Christ to the Church, *Cant. 4. 5.* By theſe two Breasts, ſome of the Primitive

mitive Writers understand the Jewish and Gentile Christians , such as love Christ cordially , and the Lillies among which they feed, are the innocent and spotless lives of sincere Believers, which nourish , and cherish their Souls , make them Lively and Vigorous, Fat and Flou-  
rishing ; These purify their Minds ; These give them the whiteness of Milk , and nothing digests with them better, than this Heavenly Food. I dislike not the practice of *Papias* (had it been but carried Euseb. on with greater discretion ) who was Eccl. mighty inquisitive, what *Andrew*, what Hist.lib. 3.  
c. 39. *Philip*, what *Peter*, what *James*, what *John*, what *Matthew*, and what the rest of the Apostles of our Lord had done , and what they used to say ; how they ordered their Lives , what their Conversation was, how they behaved themselves abroad, and at home, for by such enquiries a man may learn much, improve himself, advance in goodness, and encourage himself to the severest acts of Religion, which by having such patterns before us, become easie, and lose much of that dreadful aspect , in which they do appear to Flesh and Bloud.

Behold, Christians, here lies your Wisdom ; this is to be wise unto Salvation :

This is the Learning, that must fit you for the University of the Third Heaven; This is the Schollarship, without which you lose your places in that *College* of Glory. Study this point, and you'll be Wiser than *Aristotle*, Learned-er than all the Sages at *Athens*; all the Wisdom of *Solomon*, without this skill, would have done him but little good. Behold the Fountain of your Comforts! would you be supported in distress? would you be preserved from fainting under troubles? would you bear up under the greatest storms? would you hold out in the greatest persecutions? survey the Heroick Actions of the Martyrs and Confessors of old, and they'll shed new Life into your Spirits, strengthen you beyond expectation, keep you from despair, defend you against discouragements, and make you weather out all the tem-pests, that come against you. Are you reproach'd? look upon *David*, how patiently he endured the railings of *Shimei*; are you persecuted for Righteousness sake? look upon the Apostles of our Lord, how they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for the Name of the Lord Jesus; do you suffer wrongfully? look unto Jesus, the Author, and Cap-tain

tain of your Salvation, who for the Glory set before him, endured the Cross, and despised the shame. Are you bound with Chains? look upon St. Paul, how he glories in those shackles, and is confident, that they will promote God's Glory. Do Friends forsake you? look upon Lazarus, whom God took care of, when none would regard, or relieve him.

Nay, in Death it self, the sweet and heavenly frame of Spirit, that is to be found in the Saints of God, will be of very great efficacy to arm your selves against the assaults of that last Enemy: When Death approaches look upon the Courage, the Joy, the Comfort, the Resolution, and Chearsfulness of (a) Polycarp, of Ignatius, (a) Euseb. of Epagathus, of Sanctus, Maturus, Atta- Hist Eccl. lib. 4 c. 15. lus, Blandina, Biblis, Alexander, and o- & 1 s. c. 1. others. Come forth, my Soul, said (b) old (b) Hieron. Hilarion, Why art thou afraid? Venture in vita Hilar. c. 32. into another World, Why dost thou doubt? Hast thou served Christ so long, and dost thou tremble? The Saint in (c) Ruffinus (c) Ruffin. simil'd, and laught three times, when he vit Patr. lib. 3. Sect. was a dying. Being ask'd by his Friends, 152. that stood about him mourning, and weeping, why at the point of death he presumed to laugh: The first time, said, he, I laugh'd, because I saw you so strange.

ly afraid of death. The second time, I did so, because the World deludes you so, that you cannot find in your hearts to prepare for death: And I smiled the third time, because just now I am going from my labour to rest, from my pains, and toil here below, to everlasting quietness in Heaven. St. *Jerom* when he was departing, thus addressed himself, or is at least brought in (and suppos'd to address himself) to his Friends that stood about him :

*Epist. Euseb. ad Damas. de Morte Hieron.* *Throw off your Mourning Weeds, and sing a Psalm of Praise to God ; for hitherto I have gone through Fire and Water, but now I am entring into my Cooling-place : O what a mighty gainful thing is Death to me ! for Christ with all his Merits, and Benefits will be mine. Behold, my Friends, the Earthly Tabernacle of my House is going to be dissolved, that I may enter into another made without hands, eternal in the Heavens : I am going to put off Corruption, that I may put on Incorruption : Hitherto I have been a Traveller, but now am going to my own Country. I see the Prize before me, for which I have been running so long : I am come to my desired Haven. I am passing from Darkness to Light, from Poverty to great Riches, from fighting to Victory, from Sorrow to Joy, from a Temporal*

to an Everlasting Life, from an Offensive  
Dunghill to Odoriferous Fields. The Life  
of this World, is no Life, but Death. The  
Merchandise of Death is more precious,  
than that of Gold and Rubies. O sweet,  
O comfortable Death! Certainly thou  
art no King of Terrors, for thou givest  
true Life, thou chasest Fevers, and Wounds,  
and drivest away Thirst, and Famine:  
Come then, my Beloved, my Spouse, my  
Friend, my Sister, shew me, where he feeds,  
whom my Soul doth love. Awake, my  
Glory. Lend me thy hand, draw me after  
thee. My heart is ready, I'll rise, and  
follow the perfume, I smell, till thou bring-  
est me into my Fathers House. Thou art  
lovely, my Friend, come, do not tarry.  
By thee I must go into the Garden of my  
Beloved, that I may eat of his Fruit. The  
time is come for thee to have mercy on me,  
make haste, fly to me, for I am sick of love.  
Thou art black, but comely, thy Lips drop  
Honey. Thou art terrible to the Kings of  
the Earth, and chrushest the Spirits of Prin-  
ces; but to the Humble, thou makest thy  
Power to be known. Thou breakest the  
Horns of the Wicked, and liftest up the  
Horns of the Righteous: Open to me, my  
Sister, thou Gate of Life. Take away my  
Coat, this Mortal Coat, which I wear, and  
deck,

*The Best Exercise.*

*deck me with the Garment of Praife, and Gladness. Break the Bow, and Shield, the Sword, and the Battle. Harden not thy Heart againſt me. Take pity of a hungry Son, that bath lived long in a ſtrange Country, and deliver him back to his own Father again.*

Thus departed that *Holy Presbyter*; thus he spoke, and thus he died: What excellent Cordials are ſuch Patterns to a dying Christian! He that takes a view of them, learns what to ſay, and how to ſpeak to God, and to his own Soul, when he is going to leave this present World. Hypocrites commonly compare themſelves with Men, that are worse than themſelves, and finding themſelves better, than the worſt of men, stroak themſelves for excellent Saints: Because they are not ſo bad, as others, therefore they muſt be very admirable Christians: Because they do ſomething more than thoſe, that know not God, therefore they think, they do enough, as much as is neceſſary to Salvation. But a Christian, indeed, a Christian, that is altogether ſo, looks forward upon thoſe that are better than himſelf, and by theſe he takes example, and to come up to their perfection, is a great part of his exercise. *I heard the noise*

*noise of the Wings of the Living Creatures,*  
that touch'd one another , saith *Ezekiel* ;  
an Emblem of the Saints edifying one  
another , and touching one another by  
their Virtues ; and exciting one another  
to proficiency in the ways of seriousness.  
God hath not given all Perfections to one  
Man, lest he should be exalted above  
measure. But this Christian hath what  
thou hast not ; and thou hast that, which  
is denied to him , that considering the  
good, he hath not, and which is to be  
seen in thee , he may prefer thee before  
himself in his own thoughts : and again,  
that thou, who seest that in him, which  
thou hast not, mayst give him the greater  
respect, and honour. Counterfeit Chris-  
tians consider not, wherein other Men  
excel them , but wherein they excel o-  
thers : They take no notice, what Gifts  
their Neighbours have receiv'd above  
their own, but what evil others do com-  
mit, and wherein they fall short of them,  
and thus their spiritual Pride leads them  
on to carnal security, and that carnal se-  
curity entitles them to the Portion, which  
is referred for Hypocrites. I have not  
that Virtue, another hath, that I may la-  
bour to be Master of it ; and another  
possibly wants that Grace, I have, that

he

he may be restless, till he hath attained to it; so true is that saying of the Apostle, *The Eye cannot say unto the Hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the Head to the Feet, I have no need of you,* 1 Cor.

**12. 21.**

### IX Exercise.

*To put a charitable Interpretation upon what we see, or hear, especially, when the thing we see, or hear, doth look ill;* an Exercise commanded 1 Cor. 13. 4,5,6,7. Rom. 14. 13. Matth. 7.1,2,3. An exercise very necessary in this Age, we live in, where Mens preposterous Judgments, and Misconstructions of one anothers Actions, have made them strangers to that Charity, which thinks no evil, and the Duties of the second Table are as much neglected, as if Men had never heard of them; wherein Mens Passions have shaken off the Empire of Reason, and will be shackled by no Laws of God or Religion; wherein Men will be Judges of other Mens Hearts, and think God hath given them free leave to pass their Censures on all those, that come within the verge of their Knowledge. This Exercise includes five Duties. 1. Unwillingness to believe any thing that's ill of our fel-

low

low Christians. 2. Believing, and hoping that it was not done with any ill intention. 3. Ascribing the evil act, either to Education, or Ignorance, or the Society they have been in, or to necessity, or to some other circumstances, which may take off from the greatness of the guilt. 4. Pitying of them. 5. Believing readily all the good, we hear of our Neighbours.

1. Unwillingness to believe any thing, that's ill, of our fellow Christians. A quick belief of things of this nature, argues either Malice, or great vanity of Mind. The best Man that is, cannot escape the lashes of a slanderous Tongue, and there are thousands, that will raise ill reports of their Neighbours, without any other ground, but a humour. We see daily, how we are deceiv'd, by giving credit to uncertain Rumours; and shall I believe any thing that's ill of my Neighbour, because two or three Men say so? Nay, though a Man of Credit and Honesty accuses him, my belief at the best must be but slow and wavering. If wavering and doubting be allowable in any sort of Faith, it is in this; and *sure it cannot be so bad*, must be our language in these cases; *There may be a mistake in it; how is it*

it possible he could be so forsaken of his Reason? It is improbable, he would plunge himself into so dangerous a gulph. Let the thing be better examin'd first, before we give the verdict: Let's not be peremptory in our Judgment, till we have heard him plead in his own defence; Till then, let us suspend our thoughts, and think better of his actions. Thus we ought to qualifie the ill, we hear of our Neighbours, and he that thus exercises his Discretion, and his Reason, acts like a rational Man, upon Principles of Prudence, and Christian Circumspection.

Vid. Chry-  
soft. Ho-  
mil. in c.  
18. Gen. It is well observ'd by St. *Chrysostom* upon the 18th Chapter of *Genesis*, That God's speech, ver. 21. at first blush, seems very strange: *I will go down now, and see, whether they have done altogether ac-*  
*cording to the cry of it, which is come unto me:* But by this saying, the Almighty suggests to us an excellent Lesson, which is, not to condemn men upon hear-say, not to be facile, and easie in believing what is said to our Neighbours dishonour and disparagement: And though I grant, that sometimes by this unwillingness to believe, we may run into danger, as the Noble *Gedaliah*, *Jer. 40. 16. Jer. 41. 2.* who would not give credit to the Man, that

that told him of the barbarous design of *Ishmael*; yet he that values the favour of God, more than the applause of Men, and had rather obey the Precepts of his God, than be guided by the Rules, the World follows, and prefers a share in the happiness of another World, before a portion in the pleasures, and satisfactions of this present, will rather run these hazards, than be guilty of Uncharitableness; and he that cannot suffer for a Precept of Christ, is not fit to be his Disciple, *Mark* 8. 34, 35.

2. Believing, and Hoping, that the ill, our neighbour is found to have done, was not done with an ill intention: This is another branch of that Charitable interpretation of our Neighbours actions; without all peradventure, the intention either aggravates, or qualifies a crime. He that hurts his Neighbour with an intent to be revenged upon him, certainly is a greater Sinner, than he, that hurts him only to save himself; He that tells a passage of me, which renders me ridiculous to the Company that's present, may not do it, with an intent to traduce me, but it may drop from him, out of inconsiderateness. *Nasaman the Syrian*, did indeed bow <sup>2 Reg. 5.</sup> him-

Tollenda himself, when his Master lean'd on him  
 ex animo in the House of Rimmon, but he, that  
 suspicio, & conjectura. from thence should have concluded,  
 Ille me parum humanè salutavit, ille of rather, would have done the Man wrong,  
 culo meo his intent being onely to perform his  
 nor adhe- Duty to his Prince, while he hated the  
 sit, ille in- Idol in his heart. As it is in Religious  
 choatum Actions, a man may either pray as the  
 Sermonem Pharisee, with a design of being applau-  
 citro abru- ded by the standers by, or with an hum-  
 pit, ille ad blye fence of his wants, as the Publicane,  
 eanam non and their different intentions, may cause  
 vocavit, il- very great alteration in the acceptance  
 lius vultus of their Devotions; so in evil actions,  
 aversior the Intent gives the Sin the Dye, and  
 visus est. according to that, it is either cole-  
 Non de- black, or chequer'd with spots of White.  
 rexit suspi- Rerum estimatione.  
 cione, & benigna  
 opus est, &  
 Nibil nisi, Neighbour premeditately, or wilfully, and  
 quod in o- him, that without design, chanc'd to be  
 culos oc- the cause of his death, Numb. 35. 11,  
 curreret, ma- 30.  
 nifestumque erit credamus, &c.

Senec. de  
 ira lib. 2.  
 c. 24.

Indeed some actions are so foul, that  
 the Offender cannot with any colour  
 of Reason, be supposed to have had a  
 good intention in it; but where there is  
 one that is so, there is ten others, which  
 are

are capable of a double intention ; and since we cannot look into Mens Hearts, nor search into the recesses of their Minds ; it is our safest course to exercise our Charity , as to their intent , that it might be more plausible than it seems, or is said to be ; and this is the import of Christs Command, *John 7. 24. Judge not according to outward appearance*, upon which words St. Austin comments thus; *Open and notorious Crimes may, and must be judged, and severely censured*; <sup>Augustin. Serm. de temp.</sup> *but those that come not within the Sphere of our certain Knowledge, whether they be done with a bad or good intent, we may not, and must not judge.* Where the action is capable of a good intention, let's ever give our Vote for that : for suppose we err, it is an error of the right hand, and it is more prudent and Christian-like , to believe a bad man to be good , than bring our selves to a habit of censoring , and consequently , to run our selves into danger of mis-interpreting the harmless Acts even of the best of Men.

3. *Ascribing the evil Act, either to Education, or to Ignorance, or to the Society, our Neighbour converses with, or to Necessity, or to some other Circumstances, which may take*

Mufladin  
Saadi Shi-  
ras. Rosar.  
p. m. 23.

*take off from the greatness of the guilt.* I have read of a Persian King, who having condemn'd a Prisoner to death, and given the Executioner a sign to do his Office; the Prisoner despairing of all hopes of Mercy, in his own Language began to revile the King, and curse him. The King demanding what it was the wretch did mutter, a grave and charitable Man, that stood by, answered, This unhappy Creature was saying, that Paradise awaits those that shew Mercy, and none can so much reckon upon the happiness of another World, as those that moderate their Anger, and give Laws to their Fury. The King hearing this, immediately revoked the Sentence, and bid him live. Another Courtier that bore a spleen to this sober Man, presently steps forth, and assures the King, that the Prisoner had been so far from answering modestly, that he had most basely reviled him for condemning him, and that this Man had misrepresented the Malefactors Answer. The King hereupon fell into a passion, and protested, I like this mans Lyc better than thy Truth, for he hath covered the Malefactors ill nature, with the mantle of Charity, but thou speakest nothing but Spleen and Malice !

Though

Though I do not altogether like this way of doing good turns, yet as to the main, the Action was Heroick, and Magnanimous; and would Men, as the Philosopher advised them, put the Bag, wherein their own faults are, before, and that wherein their Neighbours offences are, behind; there is no question, but they would observe the Rules I have laid down. I am sure, he that means to work in Gods Vineyard, like a Christian, must do so. Breeding, Education, and Society, and other circumstances, do make great alterations upon Mens tempers, and inclinations; and if these Causes be rightly condesired and weighed, the injuries we receive, or fancy, will not appear so big, as Flesh and Bloud does represent them.

This made *Epicurus* take no great notice of Affronts, and Wrongs that were offer'd him, saying, that the Men that did so, acted according to their Nature, as Winds, and Heat, and Ice, and Frost do, and he could be angry with them no more than he would chide the Wind for blowing off his Cap, or blame the Sun for making him Sweat, or Drink. It takes off from the hainousness of the evil act, if we think it is not inclination,

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but

but some adventitious heat, that hath caused the injury. Such a man reproaches me, it's possible he may not know me, if he did ; he would not give himself that freedom. Another takes me to be a Drunkard, it's possible, those that hate me, told him so, and to confirm him in his belief, swore to it; such a Servant robs me, may be the ill society he kept, hath brought him to it ; another is un-

*Cogita, eum in se non esse, qui vituperat, & non moleste seres contumelias, he is put on by those, that have no other way to shew their Spleen against me; may be, it was misinformation, that made this man despise me; may be, it was his being in such a Family, made him neglect my Counsel; may be, it was the powerful charm of Self Interest, that made this man hinder me of such a Preference; may be, he had other Apprehensions of this Act, than I, and that made him contradict me. Whatever is possible in these cases, may justly be believed, and that's it, what the Apostle means by saying, that *Charity believes all things*, 1 Cor.*

Indeed, to shift off mine own sins in this manner, and to put such favourable interpretations upon them, would be delusion, and self-flattery, a great sin, and of very dangerous consequence, for that would be the way to poison the wound, which I should cure, but in my Neighbours concerns, to ascribe the injury to any thing, rather than his temper, or inclination, and malicious designs is a Virtue, and Duty, great, and excellent, and a gift, beyond that of miracles, *1 Cor. 13. 1, 2, 3.*

4. *Pitying our fellow-Christians upon the account of their faults, and errors.* Thus St. Paul pitied the Jews his Country-men, who had studied to murther him, *Rom. 9. 3.* Thus St. Austin pitied <sup>August.</sup> <sub>contra</sub> Gaudent. lib. 2. the *Donatists*, who did what they could to sully his Fame, and to wrong his Reputation. We pity men, that are Sick, and such as have not the use of their Reason, or that have lost their Estate, and Fortune, or are fallen into the hands of a powerful Enemy; and shall not we pity the man, who by his error, and offence, is fallen sick of a desperate disease, which if not speedily remedied, will make him languish and die into Eternal Torments? Shall not we pity the wretch

who hath acted below the dignity, and power of a rational Creature, unmann'd himself, and lost his reason in his sinful enterprize? Shall not we pity a Creature, that by his sin hath lost the favour of God, and his fence of Gods Omnipresence, and Omniscience, and weaken'd, if not lost his Title to the Treasures, Christ hath purchas'd by his Death and Passion? Shall not we pity him that hath lost his way, and is fallen among the Thieves of Hell, become a Subject of the Prince of Darkness, and hath brought himself into a worse condition than ever the *Israelites* were brought to, under the Tyranny of *Pharaoh*? Certainly such a man deserves our pity more, than our anger, our commiseration more than our passion, and our tears more than our stripes. The injury he hath done us, is not so great as that he hath done to himself, and he is to be pitied the more, because, may be, he doth not pity himself; we are not onely to weep with them, that weep, but to weep over those too, that have cause to mourn for themselves, and are blinded, and do not, for that's the greater misery; He that is sensible of his misery, and weeps, may yet find out a way to be freed from it; but he that is

is not, and consequently is not affected with it, runs on, and locks up all the Gates of Mercy, and Recovery against himself; whence must necessarily arise those everlasting Plagues, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.

5. *A ready belief of all the good that is said of our Neighbours.* Indeed, this is a sign of a generous mind, of a Soul enamoured with Goodness, and so in love with it, that it would have no man bad, but is desirous, that all mankind should meet in his Center. A sanctified Soul doth attentively listen to such Reports, Rejoyces at the Blessing, God hath conferred upon it's Neighbour, and if the good things said of him be not true, it however wishes, they were so. Such a man hopes that the very shadows of his Neighbours Graces, are substantial things, and though he would not, if he could help it, suffer sin upon him, or sooth him into counterfeit Piety; yet till he hath certain knowledge to the contrary, he believes, he is that man he seems, and is reported to be. A true Christian hath a Soul greedy after Goodness, and is glad of an opportunity to think well of his Neighbour. That which makes him loth to believe any ill

*The Best Exercise.*

of him, makes him believe all that is said in his commendation , for he abhors that which is evil ; sin is odious to him, because God hates it , and therefore he would have no man guilty of it ; and because Goodness is exceeding lovely, and amiable in his eyes , and God loves it, therefore he would have all men love Goodness, that God may love them, and that draws this charitable Belief from his mind ; he believes what he would have to be true, and so makes good that character St. Paul gives of Charity , that *it thinks no evil, but rejoices in the Truth,* 1 Cor. 13. 4, 5.

And this is that Exercise that is incumbent upon you, *Men, Fathers, and Brethren*, an Exercise of that necessity, that you must declare Enmity and War against that Law of Nature, *Whatsoever you would that men should do unto you, even so do ye to them*, if you neglect, or undervalue it. Is there any of you that would not be thus dealt withal ? would not you have others put such charitable interpretations on your Words and Actions, and will not you express the same civility to others ? would you have others subject to this Rule , and would you except your selves ? would you have

have others live up to this Light, and would you love Darkness better? would you have others discharge their Duty to you, and would you be excused from discharging yours to them? what can be more unreasonable, where is your Justice, your Equity, your Religion? would you have others wash your errors white, and would you throw Ink on theirs? would you have others smooth the rough out-side of your Offences, and put on them the skins of Lambs, and would you put the Lions skin on theirs? It is ill manners, as well as irreligion, and do not your Hearts and Consciences smite you for it?

You are for Peace and Quietness, but are your sinister Constructions of your Neighbours Actions the way to it? Charitable Interpretations will preserve you from a storm, but where you abate nothing of the fault, your passions must needs rise into a Tempest. Calmness of Mind is so great a Blessing, that a wise man would purchase it at any price, and when you may have it at so cheap a rate, as the favourable interpretations of what your Neighbours say, or do, will ye stand out and refuse the Treasure?

This Exercise will preserve you from a thousand sins, and as many inconveniences too. We see, how Men, when once they give way to uncharitable censures; how they run from one sin to another, and know not where to stop; this uncharitableness leads them on to envy, envy to wrath, wrath to backbiting, backbiting to revenge, revenge stops their progress in goodness, and who can reckon up all the evils that flow from this polluted Spring? These evils you *Deus alij-  
fimus scie-  
ra aspicit,  
& regit,* avoid by your favourable interpretations, and consequently lessen your account with God; so much you strike off *ro nihil vi-  
cinius ve-  
men nil nisi  
alienos ne-  
nos crepat.* from the sum of your sins, and consequently, are more expedite in your way to Heaven. What should you do but *Saadi. Gu-  
listan. p.  
263.* imitate your Father, which is above?

How loth is he to believe our Rebellion against him? *Truly they are my people,* saith he, *children that will not lye,* so he became their Saviour, Esai. 63. 8. He knows our frame; and remembers that we are but dust, saith the Royal Prophet, Psal. 103. 14. And shouldst not thou also have compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? saith the Son of God, Matth. 18. 33. Shall God allow grains in offences, and shall not we? Shall he remem-

member we are dust, and shall we forget, that our Neighbours are so, and subject to mistakes and errors? How can we expect, God will deal favourably with us, if we do not deal so with our fellow-Christians? What do we call our selves Christians for, if we will not learn to run in this race? This charitable interpretation of what we see, or hear, is the very character which is to distinguish us from Jews, Heathens, and Infidels; if we want this mark, how shall Christ distinguish us from the Goats?

Who hath made you Judges of your Neighbours? Who opened a Window to you into their hearts? Why do you usurp God's Authority? Hath he appointed a Day, to judge the World in, and will you prevent that Judgment? Are you ever like to love your Neighbours, as your selves, while you reject this Exercise? And if you are resolved not to learn it, how will you be able to appear at the great Tribunal? Have you forgot that this Charity is the root of all Virtues? Have not you heard, that this makes the Soul beautiful, and lovely in the eyes of him, that gave it? Have you forgot, that this is the Bond, that unites the Soul to its Creator? This is  
the

*The Best Exercise.*

the Harp, which cheers the heart both of God and Man : This opens the Gate of Heaven ; This is the Gold of the Sanctuary, without which, we are blind, naked, poor, and miserable. This enlarges the Soul, whereas suspicion, and rash judgment doth contract it. This is the most excellent gift, and speaking in divers Languages, and giving our Bodies to be burnt, and the greatest Learning in the World, The Eloquence of Angels, the Rhetorick of the greatest Orators, the greatest Accomplishments fall short of its Glory ; and he that hath it, offers a more acceptable Sacrifice to God, than he that kills the Cattle upon a Thousand Hills, and lays them upon his Altar : This is the Livery of the Citizens of Heaven, and that which makes Saints, and Angels so happy, is their perfect Charity. Our love to God, is nothing but froth, and smoak without it, and he'll never believe that we prize his favour, while we are loath to venture on a duty he is so much

*Hieron. in  
Regul.  
Monach.  
ad Paul. &  
Eustoch.  
c. 9.*

in love with. This makes a Man, a living Man ; without this, Religious Societies are no better than Hells, as St. Jerome phrases it, and the Inhabitants of Convents, no better than Devils. Put on Sackcloth, tear your Flesh, fast your selves

selves to Death, lie on the hard Ground, walk in black, pray whole days together, without Charity you are not yet arriv'd to the Perfection of Apostolical Holiness.

### X Exercise.

*Conscientiously, and faithfully to discharge the Duties of our several Relations, Callings, and Conditions; an Exercise injoynd Ephes. 6, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9. Col. 3. 18, 19, 20, 21, 22. Col. 4. 1. 1 Pet. 2. 17, 18. Tit. 2. 2, 3, 4, 6, 9. Heb. 13. 17. 1 Tim. 3. 2, 3, 9, 12. Rom. 13. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.* Let a Christian work never so hard, if he make not this conscientious discharge part of his work, he works as those, that built the Tower of *Babel*, to no purpose, rolls *Syphus's Stone*, and like Subterra-*Vid. Agri-*  
*neous Spirits*, that are to be seen in Mines,  
*col. de Mt-*  
*tall.* with great labour, and industry, does nothing. What I mean by several Relations, Callings, and Conditions, no Man can be ignorant of, that hath heard of such Names, as Father, and Mother, Parents, and Children, Masters, and Servants, Husbands, and Wives, Tutors, and Scholars, Magistrates, and Subjects, Ministers, and People, Rich, and Poor, Old Men, and Young Men, Bond, and Free,

Free, Noble, and Ignoble, Tradesmen, and Gentlemen. If the Exercise commanded in the Text, be universal, then certainly all these have their Task, all these are bound to exercise themselves in Duties, belonging to the relation, or condition they are in. And,

1. How do I exercise my self unto Godliness, as a Father, or Mother of Children, except I shew them a good example, except I behave my self decently, gravely, soberly, and modestly before them, that they may learn nothing, that's ill, by my carriage ? Except I breed them up in the fear of God, talk to them of the odiousness of Sin, and beauty of Holiness ; instruct them in the ways of God, and pray with them, and for them ; except I provide for them, not onely for their Bodies, but their Souls too ; except I admonish them in the Lord, check them for their Sins, reprove them for their Faults, and correct them early for any undecent Action, or Expression ; except I oblige them to use reverence and respect to their Father, that begot them, and their Mother that bore them ; except I instill conscientious Principles into them, Principles of Justice, Honesty, Goodness, Meekness, Patience, and giving every

*Deut. 6. 7,  
8.*

*Prov. 23.  
13, 14.*

*Prov. 22. 6.*

every one their due ; except I enquire into their Devotion, whether, and how they read, and pray, and hear ; except I watch their actions , their eating and drinking, sleeping , working , writing , studying, playing, and see whether they keep within bounds , or no ; except I examine them , what progress they make in Piety, whether they make conscience of secret duties, whether they are respectful, and obedient to the Ministers of the Ephes.6.4. Word of God , whether they be attentive in hearing Sermons , whether they delight in keeping the Lord's Day holy, and what apprehensions they have of their Spiritual, and Eternal condition, how they spend their time, and whether they apply themselves to those Virtues they read and hear of ; whether they do not indulge themselves in Pride, or Lying, or Envy, or Hatred, or revengeful Desires, whether they are tractable, and live up to the Rules, and Precepts, I give them.

2. Then I exercise my self unto God-lines, as a Child, as a Son, or Daughter, Ephes. 6. when I follow the good Instructions of 1, 2, 3. my Parents, when I obey them in every lawful thing, when I have an honest desire to please them , and a filial fear of their

their displeasure, when I do not lose my respect to them, though I am got out of their jurisdiction, nor deride them for their infirmities, but like the Sons of

**Gen. 9. 23.** *Noah*, cover their nakedness with the Cloak of Charity; when I speak of them, and to them with reverence, when I take their admonition, and correction kindly, when I seek to promote their honour, credit, and reputation, when I attend to their good counsels, and am guided by their discretion, and wisdom, and good example; when I imitate them in their seriousness, and when I hearken to their Instructions, and do not forsake their Law; when I neither Marry, nor settle my self in the World without their advice, and am govern'd by their direction

**Deut. 21.**  
18.

**Prov. 23.**  
22.

**Gen. 24. 3.**

more, than by mine own determination; when I express my grateful resentment of their kindnesses, and study how I may requite their paternal care and love, when I interpret all they do or say candidly, when I respect them, though they are Poor, and bear the same love to them if they be sunk into a low Condition, that I would have done, if they had been advanced to the highest pitch of prosperity; when I relieve them in their distress, support them in their want, and like

like

like *Aeneas*, carry them out upon my shoulders, to save them from fire, and danger ; when like that happy Daughter in *Pliny*, I feed them with mine own Bloud ; and like the Children of *Catania* of old, rather endanger my self, than see them perish ; when in their unlawful commands I shew passive Obedience , and where I cannot obey them for Conscience sake, suffer their anger, and the effects of it patiently , without traducing of them, or exposing them to the scorn, and laughter of Men ; when like the *Re-chabites*, I obey them in things lawful, yet difficult, and suffer not the uneasiness, or hardness of the task, to discourage me from acting according to their Prescriptions.

3. How can that Man be said to exercise himself unto Godliness, as a Master of a Family, that is himself a slave to sin, and to the Devil, that either drinks, or swears, or cheats, or lyes , and instead of discouraging his Servants from any of these sins, doth rather tempt, and entice them to these transgressions ? That is regardless of his great Master in Heaven, to whom e'er long he must give an account of his Stewardship. That is indifferent, what becomes of his Servants Souls,

*Plin. Nat. Hist. L. 7.*

*Jer. 35. 8.*

*Psal. 101.*

*2, 3, 4, 5,*

*6, 7.*

Acts 16.

53.

Joh. 24:  
15.

Souls, and is not much concern'd, whether they are ever like to get to Heaven, so they do but do their business well on Earth. That makes nothing of God's Commands, and lives, as if the Precepts of the Lord Jesus did not belong to him. That gives himself to laziness, and idleness, and thereby teaches his Servants to do so too. That makes no Conscience of redeeming the time, and while he should work, and be busie at his Calling, sits in an Alehouse, or Tavern, or runs into ill Company. That cares not, what Qualifications his Servants have, so they will but do his Work ; and is not at all displeased, if they privily slander their Neighbours, or turn aside from the holy Commandment deliver'd unto them. That either oppresses his Servant with Work, and Drudgery, or gives him leave to waste much time in doing nothing. That allows his Servants no time, to perform their Duty to their Maker, nor encourages them to Prayer by his example, and command. That gives them liberty to do what they please on the Lord's Day, and is unconcern'd, if they neglect the publick Worship of God, or their private Devotion. That takes no notice of their thrivings in Grace, and cares not, what

what he doth in their presence, so his passion, and humour be but gratified : That gives them bitter language, and instead of reproofing of them with meekness and gentleness for their sins, and faults, reviles them with all possible wrath, and bitterness: That doth not give them things <sup>Deut. 24.</sup>  
<sup>14, 15.</sup> necessary, and convenient for their sustenance, and denies them the Wages for which they serve him: That doth not faithfully instruct his Covenant-Servant in the Art, or Trade, he hath promised <sup>Col. 4. 1.</sup> to instruct him in, and hath no tenderness, no compassion to such persons in their distress, and sickness: That thinks much of giving them Bread, when they cannot work, and of maintaining them, when Providence hath disabled them from doing their Masters business.

4. If I will exercise my self unto Godliness, as a Servant, I must be diligent and faithful, industrious and careful in the Work I am employ'd in ; I must advance <sup>Math. 8. 9.</sup> my Master's Interest, and manage his Concerns in his absence with the same honesty, that I would do, if he were present ; I must cheerfully run at his Command, if not contrary to the Will of God, and be ready to do the Errand, he sends me upon. I must not pick and chuse my Work,

M but

but do that, which he thinks most fit,  
and convenient for me. I must not grumble  
at his order, nor be unwilling to go  
where he sends me. I must love him,  
as well as serve him, and honour the froward,  
as well as the gentle: I must suffer  
none of his Goods to be embezell'd, nor  
waste the Treasure, he hath committed  
to my charge: I must not steal from him,  
what I think, he doth not know of, nor  
enrich my self by what he hath, farther  
than he gives me leave, and liberty. I  
must not mispend the hours, he gives me  
for my Work, nor dissemble with him in  
things, that make for his just interest and  
advantage. I must be tender of his hon-  
our, and the secrets of the House, I am  
acquainted withal, I must not reveal to

<sup>1 Pet. 2. 18.</sup> strangers. I must not discover his faults,  
without a lawful call, nor tell Stories, to  
the Men that hate him, of his actions: I  
must not consort with idle Companions,  
nor let persons come into his House, that

<sup>Tit. 2. 9, 10.</sup> would either wrong him, or do him mis-  
chief. I must stand up in his Vindication,  
when he is abused, and take heed of ex-  
aggerating his errors, if once they come  
to be publick. I must not tell him a lye,  
if I have committed a fault, and am ask'd  
about it, nor stand to justifie, or excuse

my

my error, when it will not bear an Apology. I must not answer again, when I <sup>Jam. 5. 16.</sup> am chid by him, much less repay him with ill language, if his passion prompts him to speak more, than otherwise he would have done. I must bear with his <sup>2 Sam. 19.</sup> infirmities, and though he hath his failings, <sup>26, 27.</sup> yet do him service with fear and trembling. I must not despise him, because I am better born, nor speak therefore dishonourably of him, because I understand more than he. I must plead Conscience, <sup>Gen. 39. 9.</sup> when he would have me do a thing, that's displeasing to God, and humbly beg of him, not to put me upon that, which in the end will be a torment to my Spirit. I must endeavour to gain his love, and <sup>Ephes. 6.</sup> do sometimes more than he commands <sup>5, 6, 7, 8.</sup> me, to testifie my zeal to do my duty. I must lissen to the good Lessons he gives me from the Word of God, and exhort my fellow-servants to do the like. I must be kind to his Children, and take care, that by my familiar converses with them, I do not draw them into any thing, that may be prejudicial either to their Souls, or Bodies.

5. That Man doth not exercise himself <sup>Col. 3. 19.</sup> unto Godliness, as a Husband, that loves <sup>20.</sup> not his Wife without dissimulation;

**1 Cor. 14.** or doth not, as much as in him lies,  
34, 35. promote her spiritual, and everlasting  
Welfare; that doth not care for dwelling  
with her, nor thinks it his duty to en-  
treat the Light of Gods Countenance  
for her, or joyn in prayer with her: That  
**1 Cor. 7.** is intemperate in his Wedlock, or thinks,  
11, 12. that the strict alliance between him and  
her warrants every immodest, extra-  
gant, and inordinate pleasure, and de-  
**1 Cor. 7.** desire, or that no *Decorum* is to be observ'd  
29. in that estate: That hath no care of her  
Health, Wealth, and Credit, or loves  
her more for her Money, and Beauty,  
than her Virtue: That gives her reproach-  
ful language, and reprobates her not with  
tenderness and compassion, if her errours  
deserve reprehension: That doth not in-  
**Ephes. 5.** struct her, so far as he is able, or doth not  
25. help her to bear the burthen of the Fa-  
mily: That is a stranger to all pity, and  
cares not, what becomes of her, so him-  
self can but enjoy health, and prosper-  
ity; whose carriage to her is churlish,  
and his expressions to her dipt in Gall, and  
**1 Pet. 3. 7.** Vinegar: That exposes her natural de-  
fects before company, and aggravates her  
neglects, which should be qualified with  
softer constructions: That instead of  
comforting her, flights her, and is so far  
from

from healing her wounds, that he doth what he can, to make them wider : That doth not allow her convenient Food, and Raiment, and let's her want those necessary supplies, which the Law of Nations binds him to : That doth not protect her, when she is in danger, nor redeem her from the malice and cruelty of <sup>1 Sam. 30.</sup> those, that use all means to disparage her : <sup>18, 19.</sup> That doth not trust her with the affairs of the Family, if she be able to manage them, or conceals from her the things which appertain to their common safety : That goes beyond the bounds of the Authority, God hath given him over her, and instead of being her Head, makes <sup>Matth. 19.</sup> himself a Tyrant, and her a Slave : That doth not yield unto her reasonable requests, and by his good example encourage her to Piety, Gravity, Charity, and Discretion : That despises her good Counsel, and will be sooner perswaded by a stranger, or idle Companion, than by her that lies in his bosom : That laughs at her Devotion, and takes pains to make her weary of her serioutness : That takes it ill, she should obey God more, than him, and thinks nothing so tedious, as her frequent exhorting of him to universal Conscientiousness. Such

a Man for certain doth not exercise himself unto Godliness, but rather strives to work himself out of the Obligations of it, and exercises himself into hardness of heart, and impenitence.

6. And indeed the same may be said of the Woman, that doth not discharge the Duty of a Wife, if Married to a Husband. If her Religion shall deserve this name of exercising her self unto Godliness, her great care must be, according

Eph. 5. 33. to the Apostle's Rule, to *reverence her Husband.* After him must be her desire, Gen. 3. 16.

and it must be her glory, to submit to him in the fear of God. In her mind she must esteem him, and value him, as

1 Cor. 11. the Image and Glory of the Great Creator.

1 Sam. 18. To love him must become natural

28. to her; and to tend him, though never

Prov. 31. so weak, or calamitous, must be one great

11, 12. part of her care. Her Conversation must

1 Pet. 3. be chaste, and the value she hath for him

1, 2. must appear in her words and actions.

She must fear him, as her Master, and yet nothing must cause that fear, but affection. She must deny her self for him,

Col. 3. 18. and in things indifferent, his Will must be her Rule to go by. Her submission must be hearty, and it must not be any sinister respect, but Conscience, that must

pro-

produce it. She must wave her Privileges that Birth and Breeding have given her, and honour him according to the Law of him that joyned them. Her study must be to make his life comfortable, and she must contrive soft expressions to engage his inclinations. Her language to him must be mild, and peaceable, and her behaviour such as becomes a Woman, that professes Godliness. Her Conversation must be the same in his absence, that it is in his presence ; and she must give him such demonstration of her kindness, that his heart may confide in her. To get a meek and quiet spirit, <sup>1 Pet. 3. 4</sup> must be not the least part of her Prayer, and insolence and haughtiness of Spirit <sup>Prov. 21. 19.</sup> she must shun, as the Pestilence. She <sup>Prov. 21.</sup> must be a stranger to brawling, and <sup>24.</sup> her words must be weighed in a ballance. She must flee idleness, as an Enemy, and contrive how to advance her Husband's Interest with honesty. She must encourage her Servants to their labour, and <sup>Prov. 31. 15, 16, 17,</sup> guide them by her eye. Her feet must <sup>19, 20.</sup> not be much in the Streets, and it is an answer fit to be given to an Angel, that *Sarah is in her Tent.* Her ears must be <sup>Prov. 7. 12. Gen. 12. 9.</sup> open to her Husband's counsel, and she must not think much of his reproof, and

reprehension. Her entertainment of him must be with a cheerful countenance, and crostness of humour must be banish'd from her temper. If ought have provoked him, she must study arts to pacifie him ; and whatever revengeful heat she finds him in, she must study, how to allay the inflammation. His anger she must overcome by her meekness ; and if he be inclined to passion , take the fittest opportunities to hush those tempests. In Expences she must move by his advice, and the Propriety being properly in him, consult him upon such occasions. His kindnes to her, must not make her usurp Authority over him ; and the more he condescends to her, the more she must oblige him by her manners.

7. If I mean to exercise my self unto Godliness as a Minister of the Gospel, I must be more concern'd for mens Souls, than for a maintenance, and I do little, if I do not study to advance the peoples happiness ; I must not sow pillows under their elbows, nor flatter them with easie Injunctions into Ruine. I must not speak peace to them, when there is none, nor tell them that they are in Gods favour , when their averseness from Gospel-Duties shews them Reprobates. I must

<sup>2</sup> Reg 14.  
<sup>2, 9, 10.</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tim. 2.  
<sup>12.</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Tim. 4.  
<sup>5.</sup>

Ezek. 34.  
<sup>2, 3, 4.</sup>

must become an intercessor for them at the Throne of Grace, and be more than ordinarily importunate with God, to <sup>Ezek. 13.</sup> pour out upon them, the Spirit of Grace, <sup>10, 18.</sup> and Supplication. My life must be holy, and I must not tell them of one way, and go another; I must let them see, that I <sup>I Tim. 4.  
12.</sup> am in good earnest when I preach to them, and that I do not onely give them a cast of my Office, when I fright them with Damnation. They must see, that my self am afraid of God's Judgments, and that I have deliberately chosen that serious-<sup>2 Cor. 5.  
9, 10, 11.</sup> ness, which I press upon them, by a thousand Arguments. I must enquire into their wants, and labour to suit my Plai-<sup>1 Cor. 1.  
11.</sup> ster to their Wounds. I must give them warning, that they fall not into the snare <sup>1, 2, 3.  
Ezek. 3.  
17, 18.</sup> of the Devil, and if they be catcht in it, see which way I may extricate, and free them from that danger. I must open my Heart and Bosom to them, and convince them, that nothing is so pleasing to me, as an opportunity to advance their spiritual Interest. I must be instant in sea-<sup>2 Tim. 4.  
son, and out of season, and exhort, and 1, 2.  
rebuke, with all long suffering, and Do-  
ctrine. The sins I do reprove in them, I must hate like poison; and in vain do I bid them abstain from the forbidden</sup>

Tree,

Tree, if I stretch forth my hand to eat Jam. 5. 14. of it. I must visit them when they are sick, and must make my self acquainted Phil. 4. 3. with their necessities, I must relieve the poor, so far as I am able, and by my Zeal and Gentleness, win, even upon those that hate me. I must comfort the weak-hearted, and strengthen the feeble knees.

1 Tim. 4. I must meditate in the Scriptures, and  
15. make it my business to know the Will of  
2 Tim 2. God. I must be able to resolve their  
24, 25. doubts, and to confute such as creep in unawares, to pervert their Souls. I must learn to rule my own House well, that  
3 Tim. 3. I may be able to prescribe good Rules  
3, 4, 5. to others; and must not neglect the Gift  
1 Tim. 4. that is in me, but study how I may lay  
14. out my self, for the promoting of Gods Glory.

8. On the other side, If I would have my Conscience bear me witness, that I exercise my self unto Godliness, as a Hearer, or one that lives under the guidance, and conduct of the Ministry; I must be sure to obey, them that have the Rule over me, and count them worthy Heb. 13. of double Honour, that labour in the 17. Word and Doctrine. I must look upon 1 Tim. 5. them as Ambassadors from God, and re-  
2 Cor. 5. spect them as Messengers of the Lord of  
20. 2 Cor. 4. 5, 6, 7. Hosts.

Hosts. I must learn to see God in them, and must look farther than their outside, even to the Commission God hath given them. I must not despise them, because they carry this Treasure in earthen Vessels, nor think the worse of them, because they are Men of the same passions, that I am. I must not contemn the whole Function, because some Wolves do get in among the Sheep ; nor blaspheme the Order, because there is a *Judas* in the Colledge of *Jesus*. I must be kind to them for Gods sake, and remember that the cup of cold Water I give to them, I give to him that sent them. I must not deny them maintenance, nor let them labour without encouragement. I must remember, that such labourers are worthy of their hire, and deserve so much the more, by how much their pains are of a sublimer nature. I must consult with them in my perplexities, and in my doubts be guided by their directions. I must have recourse to them, when I lie under strong Temptations, and reveal my case to them, that they may know, how to apply a remedy. I must ask seriously of them, what I must do to inherit eternal Life, and when I know it, must run, and make haste to do it. I must consider, that they

Acts 14.  
15.

Matth. 10.  
42.

Matth. 10.  
10.

1 Cor. 9.

9, 10, 11.

Acts 2.37.

1 Cor. 7 1.

1 Cor. 8 1.

they watch for my Soul, and make that an argument to express my Love to them

<sup>Phil. 4. 10.</sup> upon all occasions. I must not think any <sup>14, 17, 19.</sup> thing that is bestow'd on them, as thrown <sup>Gal. 4. 15,</sup> away, but believe it will some way or <sup>16.</sup> descend upon me in richer showers.

I must not shew my self froward, when they do reprove me, nor fall out with them, because they preach no Doctrine, that pleases my sensual Appetite. I must so love them, as to stand up for them when they are traduced, and think it my Duty to speak and act for them, to whom I am more beholding, than to the nearest Relations.

9. I cannot exercise my self unto God-lines, as a Magistrate, except I protect the Innocent, and lash the Guilty into better manners. I must be a terror to evil-doers, and an encourager of those that do well. I must reign in Righteousness, and my Rule must be in the fear of God. I must not bear the Sword in vain, nor must mine eye spare those, whom God would not have live. I must secure those that are committed to my care against dangers, and must not suffer cruel men to oppress them. I must seek their welfare, to the best of my skill and power, and neglect no lawful means to advance

<sup>2 Sam. 24.</sup>

<sup>3.</sup>

<sup>Rom. 13. 4.</sup>

<sup>Psal. 72. 47.</sup>

vance their Good, and Prosperity. I must prescribe them wholesome Laws, and see that they obey the Law of him, who is above all Kings and Princes. I must not stop my ear against the cry of the Poor, nor suffer the Widow and Fatherless to be trampled on by their more powerful Neighbours. I must not slay my Subjects,<sup>1 Kings 12, 6, 7.</sup> when they are willing to let me have their Fleeces, nor exercise Tyranny over them, when they are willing to submit to the Scepter of my Mercy. I must remember, I have an account to give to that God that is above me, and that I am as lyable to his Rods and Axes, as <sup>Dan. 4.</sup> my meanest Vassal is to mine. I must <sup>34, 35, 37.</sup> not do what I please, but what is convenient, and my Will must not be my Law, but the Will of him, that hath put this Power into my hands: I must remember, that Magistrates are called Gods, and <sup>Psal. 82, 6.</sup> that I can imitate God in nothing so much as in doing good. I must be as Holy as I am Great, and be as eminent in Goodness, as I am in Power; I must keep up that Religion, which is most agreeable to the word of God, and must not be ashamed to know the Almighty's Precepts. I must proscribe Idolatry, as a <sup>Deut. 17.</sup> thing accursed, and take care, that the <sup>18.</sup> <sup>2 Kings</sup> Doctrine <sup>18.</sup>

<sup>2 Chron.  
17. 3, 4</sup>

<sup>2 Chron.</sup>

<sup>19. 5, 6, 7</sup>

<sup>8.</sup>

<sup>2 Chron. 3.</sup>

<sup>4</sup>

<sup>Psal. 119.</sup>

<sup>104.</sup>

<sup>Psal. 139.</sup>

<sup>21.</sup>

<sup>Rom. 13.</sup>

<sup>1, 2, 3.</sup>

<sup>Jeh. 1.</sup>

<sup>16, 17.</sup>

Doctrine, which is taught within my Dominions, be sound, and Catholick. I must follow the pious examples of my Religious Forefathers, and be a nursing Father to the Church, that bred me. I must preserve the Right of all men, and must especially take heed, that the Land be not defiled with Sacrilege, I must promote Men of Honesty, and Virtue to places of Trust, and must exhort my Subjects in times of Calamity, to seek the God of their Fathers with Prayer, and Fasting. I must fight more against my intestine Enemies, than against foreign Foes, and look upon the lusts of my bosom, to be greater Traytors, than those that would deprive, and rob me of my Purple.

10. If I mean to exercise my self unto Godliness, as a Subject, I must look upon my Prince, as God's Vicegerent, and stand in awe of that Authority, the Almighty hath stamp'd upon him. I must not speak evil of Dignities, nor report things abroad, which are false, to my King's discredit. I must submit to his Orders, that contradict not the Injunctions

of

of the greater Lawgiver, and live peaceably under his Government. I must not sow Sedition among my Neighbours, nor fill them with prejudice against their law-  
ful Governour : I must suffer rather, than resist, and be perswaded, that those, who <sup>1 Sam. 26.</sup> shall receive to themselves Dam-<sup>9, 10.</sup>  
<sup>Rom. 13.7.</sup>nation. I must cheerfully give him that Tribute, I owe him, and pay him that Respect and Honour, which the Law of God and Nature doth allow him. I must not find fault with his Judicial Proceedings, because they cross my Interest; nor therefore refuse Obedience, because he doth not think fit to do, what I have a mind to. I must not be subject only for wrath, but for Conscience sake; and it must not be fear of punishment, but love to God, and Obedience to his Precepts, must make me tractable. When he punishes me justly, I must not rail at him; and when unjustly, I must patiently bear it. I must not fight against him, though he oppress me; and let the Injury he doth me, be never so great, I must use no other Arms, but Tears, and Prayers: Though his Yoak be heavy, I must patiently bear it, and leave all Vengeance <sup>Rom. 12.</sup> to that God, that hath said, *I will repay.*<sup>19.</sup> I must pray for him, though he wrong me;

**Psalm 21.** me ; and beg hard of God to give him  
**3, 2, 3, 4.** the Spirit of Wisdom, and Government,

though he trample upon me at his pleasure. I must not rashly censure his Actions, because I do not apprehend the reason of them ; and forbear judging of

**I Kings 1.** them, till I know the cause that moved him. I must not onely have a due Veneration for him in my heart, but must express it in my gestures too ; and my outward behaviour to him must shew, that

**2 Sam. 14.** I look upon him, as a *Mortal God*. If he falls into any scandalous sins, I must

**Psal. 82.** 6. not attempt to reform him by Insurrection, but must address my self to that God,

**2 Sam. 12.** in whose hands the hearts of Princes are, and leave it to his Power and Goodness, to make him a Man after his own heart.

**2 Chron.** 11. If I mean to exercise my self unto Godliness, as a Judge, my Tribunal must be as sacred, as God's Temple, and afford refuge to the Oppressed, as much,

**19.** 6. as the Horns of the Altar. I must be impartial in my Sentence, and dread Injustice, as much, as I would do the Arch-Angels Trumpet.

**Iai. 1.** 17. I must be blind to Bribes, and hate Covetousness, as I do the Scorpions sting. I must love Truth beyond all the Riches of the East, and Falshood must be a Name, as odious to

**Exod. 18.**

**21.**

me.

me, as that of *Beelzebub*. I must mingle Pity with my Threatnings, and Mercy, and Justice must ever kill each other in my Breast. I must lay aside passion, and prejudice, and hear Men with that calmness, that I would use to say my Prayers. Perjury I must punish, as the bane of humane Society, and Faithfulness must receive my applause, and highest commendations. I must not be swayed by Power in my Justice, nor must great Men by their Authority command my Conscience. I must do right to the Poor, as well as to the Rich, and be so much a Christian, as to be no respester of persons. I must not rejoice at the destruction of him that hates me, nor laugh at the punishment, that falls on the man, that hath done me evil. I must not judge in favour of my Relation, because he is so, nor must I acknowledge any other Kinred upon the Bench, but such, as are allay'd to Righteousness. I must not delay a Cause, when I may dispatch it; nor make my Neighbour spend time in attendance, when it lies in my power to tell him, what he is to trust to. I must attend to the Cause that comes before me, and turn the other ear to the Party that is accused. I must not encourage quarrelling,

ling, nor suggest Arguments, which may  
 Luk. 18.2. feed the fire of Contention. I must not  
 be at once, an Accuser and a Judge, nor  
 carry my self proudly, no, not against  
 an Enemy. I must study Piety, as well  
 as Justice; and remember, that he can-  
 Pfal. 72.2. not be a good Judge, that is an ill man;  
 Acts 24.  
 26.  
 Prov. 31. turned out, may keep him in awe for  
 4, 5. some time, yet whenever he can promise  
 himself impunity, or secure himself against  
 the Eyes of Men, he'll make bold to per-  
 vert Judgment, and sacrifice all to his  
 own Interest.

Acts 24.1,  
 2, 9, 10, 13. 12. He that will exercise himself un-  
 to Godliness, as a Client, must bear no  
 Wrath, no Malice to the Man that goes  
 to Law with him; must use no unlaw-  
 ful means to compass his Design,  
 nor think by Flattery, or Gifts, to  
 incline the Judges favour. He must  
 commit himself to him that judges Right-  
 eously, and with Patience, and Humili-  
 ty, receive the Sentence of him, to  
 whom Authority hath left the determina-  
 tion. He must not vaunt himself, if he  
 gets the better of him, that opposed him;  
 nor therefore undervalue his Neighbour,  
 because the Lot is fallen to him in plea-  
 sant places. He must learn to behave  
 him-

Math. 5.  
 39, 40.

himself peaceably for the future , and so order his conversation, that he may not give offence to any. He must avoid litigiousness, as the great enemy of Christi-<sup>1 Cor. 6.</sup>anity, and where differences may be com-<sup>1,2,5,6,7.</sup>posed at an easier rate, shun going to Law, as much as a Patient dreads cutting off his Hand, or Arm, till meer necessity forces him.

13. The same may be said of School-Masters and Scholars ; The Master doth not exercise himself unto Godliness, that doth not train up the Child under his Charge, in the way he is to go ; That doth not season his Mind with a Form of sound Words, and whilst he infuses Learning into him, neglects to teach him, how to behave himself to God, and <sup>2 Tim. 1.</sup> to his Neighbour : That cockers the young man in his Folly , or lets him walk in the way of his Heart : That doth not break the stubborn Youth by Admonition, and just Correction , and cares not what becomes of him, so himself doth but get a livelihood : That doth not check the first beginnings of Sin in <sup>Acts 22. 3</sup> him, or lets the Tares run on , till they choak the good Seed, that's sown there ; That doth not teach him to stand in awe of his Maker, or doth not by his seri-

ous Deportment shew him, how he may render himself Beloved, and Beneficial to Mankind.

And so the Scholar continues a stranger to this Exercise ; That will be taught nothing, but what is pleasing to his brutish appetite ; That values himself upon the Estate he is to inherit, and had rather be Ignorant and Rich, than Wise and Poor. That stops his Ears against the sound Instructions of his Tutor, and delights in nothing so much, as Froth, and Vanity. That had rather handle a pack of Cards, than his Bible ; and is more taken with a fine Suit of Cloaths, than with the Ornaments of Wisdom, and Understanding ; That thinks ill of his Master, because he seeks his Good, or calls him Cruel, or Insolent, because he will not suffer him to follow his own imaginations ; That spends his time in Play, which should be employed in Learning, and thinks no Argument solid, but what is pleaded in favour of his Laziness.

<sup>1 Tim. 6.  
7, 18, 19.</sup> 14. If I am Rich, and mean to exercise my self unto Godliness, as such, I must remember, that I am but Gods Steward, and sent hither to disperse those Blessings, he hath bestow'd upon me, among those, he hath

hath made objects of my Charity. I must not oppress the Poor , because he can-  
not hurt me, nor deny another man what  
is due to him, because he hath no pow-  
er to withstand me ; I must make my self  
friends of the Mammon of Unrighteous-  
ness , and so husband that Estate I have,  
as to provide for everlasting Habitations.  
I must not think my self the better man  
for my Riches , nor fancy God will be  
more kind to me in the last day , because  
my enjoyments were greater here , than  
my Neighbours. I must mistrust my own  
Prosperity , and look upon it, as more  
dangerous, than the greatest misery. I  
must walk very circumspectly in my af- Psal. 62. 10.  
fluence, and take heed my Heart be not  
set on things, which, before I am aware,  
will make themselves wings, and fly a-  
way. I must make the Poor my Pen-Matth. 19.  
sioners , and lay up a good foundation a- 23.  
against the time to come. I must be Li- Luk. 19. 8.  
beral and Bountiful , as I expect God  
should be munificent to me, and believe,  
I am unjust, if I do not according to my  
ability , provide for Christs distressed  
Members. I must learn to be humble in James 1.  
the midst of my plenty , and the more 10.  
Blessings God heaps upon me, the more  
I must grow in Grace and Holiness. I

**James 2.** must study how I may do good, and  
**1, 2, 3, 4, 5.** make it the great Concern of my life, so  
 to deport my self in this condition, that  
 I may inherit Eternal life.

**Prov. 10. 4.** As a poor man, I then exercise my self unto Godliness, when I am contented

**Prov. 24.** with the condition, I am in, and labour  
**30.** in the sweat of my Brows, to get mine

**Prov. 26.** own Bread; When I do not indulge my self in idleness, and go upon this Principle,

**13.**

**2 Thes. 3.** that he that will not work, neither shall he eat. When I envy not the Rich, their vast Possessions, and rejoice in having but

**10.**

**Food and Raiment**, as much as others do in a great Inheritance; When I labour to be poor in Spirit, and keep my self

**Matth. 5.** from repining, and mistrusting Gods Providence; When I am ambitious of the Riches of Grace, and thirst after nothing so much, as the Treasure, which Thieves

**6.** cannot steal away; When the Kingdom I seek, is the Kingdom of God, and his

**1 Cor. 15.** Righteousness, and nothing ingrosses my desires so much, as to be always abounding in the Work of the Lord, forasmuch

**58.** as I know, my Labour is not in vain in the Lord.

**15.** Then I exercise my self unto Godliness, as a Great Man, or a Man of a Gentle, and Noble Extract; when I  
 mind

mind things Great, and Generous, and flight those Lusts which other men admire, and make pleasing God, the chief care of my Life, while others make it their principal care and business, to please and gratifie themselves ; When I undervalue that world, others doat on, and love that God with Zeal, and Fervency, whom others love only in words, and vain pretences ; When I pray with Groans, which cannot be uttered, while others draw nigh to God only with their lips, and their hearts are far from him ; and dare lose something for Christ, while others follow him no farther, than is consistent with their Temporal Glory ; when I mind that, which many Kings, and Prophets, and Righteous Men have desired to see, even the Spiritual Riches of Grace, and the everlasting Mercies of *David* ; When I mind that, for which *Abraham* forsook his own Countrey, and *Moses* left the dazzling Glories of *Pharaoh's Court*, and for which, Saints and Martyrs have spilt their Blood ; even that everlasting Kingdom of Bliss, which Sense cannot Fathom, and no Eye can perceive, but that of an illuminated Understanding, and which the King Immortal, who cannot lye, hath promised

fed to the Man, that shall be faithful unto death; When I am ambitious of the company of that vast multitude we read of, *Rev. 7. 9.* which no man can number, out of all Nations, Kinred, Tongues, and People, that stand before the Throne, and before the Lamb, with Palms in their hands, and clothed in White Raiment, and cry day and night, *Salvation unto our God, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.* When I can offer free-will-offerings to God, and am so far from being frightened at the Gift, God requires at my hands, that I am ready to do more, than

<sup>2 Cor. 8.  
1, 2, 3  
2 Cor. 9. 2,  
Acts 2 44,  
45.</sup> I have an express Command for, like the Pious Souls at the erecting of the Tabernacle, who being bid to bring in their proportion, freely offered more than their share, and were so free to give, that *Moses* was forced to put a stop to their Generosity and Liberality, *Exod. 36. 3, 5, 6.*

<sup>Rom. 12.  
1, 9, 10, 11,  
12, 13.</sup> And to add no more, than I exercise my self unto Godliness, as a common ordinary man, as a man in a lower Sphere, and private station; When I am just in all my dealings, and in Simplicity, and Godly Sincerity, not with fleshly Wisdom, but by the Grace of God, have my Conversation in the World. When

I live in a fence of God's Mercy, and am <sup>2 Cor. 1.</sup> ready to do good Offices to all my Neigh- <sup>12.</sup> bours, When I study Truth in my Trade, <sup>2 Theft 3.</sup> and Calling, and as much as in me lies, <sup>7, 8.</sup> provide things honest in the sight of all <sup>Rom. 12.</sup> Men. When I am not slothful in business, but fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord, re- joycing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer, &c.

You see, *Christians*, what it is to be universally conscientious. In vain doth the Pharisee boast, *I thank thee, O God,* <sup>Luke 18:</sup> *that I am not as other Men, Extortioners,* <sup>11.</sup> *Unjust, Adulterers, nor even as this Pub- licane.* As much as he valued himself upon his perfections, it was nothing but Rags, and menstrual Cloaths; for in this Catalogue no Duties of his several Relations are mention'd, and he knew not what it was to live like a Divine, or like a Loyal Subject. Let *Alexander* boast of his Conquering *Persia, India, and other Countries*, and mourn, that there are no more Worlds to conquer; He that faithfully discharges the Duties of his several Relations, is a greater Man. Such a Man is sensible, that God will not be put off with shews, and shadows, nor with a righteousness, that is as a Morning Cloud, and as the early Dew, which passeth away.

Such

*The Best Exercise.*

Such a man receives the Kingdom of Heaven as a little Child, and doth not stand out for want of pains: Such a man is resolved to know God, and what the exceeding greatness of his Power is to them who believe.

O Sirs, retire ; and think of the reasonableness of this Exercise : O that we could make you see the necessity of it ! O that it lay in my power to perswade you to it ! O that I had Rhetorick enough to charm you ! O that I had the Tongues of Angels to catch your Inclinations by a holy guile ! But it is not Eloquence will do it ; God's Spirit must breathe upon you, and O that this blessed Spirit would blow upon you, and compel you to come in , and make you so sensible of the love of God, that you might not be able to withstand its force, but become greedy, and ambitious of this Employment ! You would then see , how much these men are mistaken, how much they are out, what a wrong way they take, that place all Religion in a few heartless Prayers, and careless Wishes , and will not be perswaded to believe , that God ever commanded this faithful discharge of the Duties of their several Relations and Callings ; and that they may not be obli-

obliged to it, are resolved to continue in that unbelief to their dying day : You would be ready to call after them, *Awake ye that sleep, and Christ shall give you light :* You would wonder that they take no greater care to dress up their Souls for the Marriage of the Lamb ; O how you would pity them, bemoan them, and wish for a Fountain of Tears to bewail their stubbornness ! O how you would be frightened to see what burthens they lay upon their backs ! Burthens insupportable, burthens, which will crush them, burthens, which will make them cry out, one day, O that there had been such a heart in me ! O that I had kept close to the Law, and to the Testimony ! O that I had look'd more to my ways ! O that I had remembred what a charge God gave me ! O that I had given ease to my Soul when Christ offered to refresh me ! O that I had submitted to his Yoak in all things, when he promised me rest for my Soul !

We have innumerable examples of men, who even in this life have felt the burthen of God's anger for their unfaithful discharge of these Duties : How many Fathers have groan'd under a fence of neglect of their duty to their Children ? How many

many Children have smarted for the neglect of theirs to their Parents ? How hath God punish'd Princes , how hath he visited Subjects for their carelessness of these mutual Offices? How many Servants have complain'd that they have been undone, because their Masters admonish'd them not ? How many Masters have been ruined, because their Servants remembred not what faithfulness , and what duties, God required at their hands? And if God's anger against these neglects be so heavy in this life , what will it be in the day of Wrath, and in the day of Indignation ? The Judgments God sends upon Men here, are but shadows of the future , emblems of greater plagues in another World, representations of more violent storms that are to follow , and God punishes some only, that the rest may take warning ; and those he punishes, he punishes but gently, to shew, that if these Rods cannot melt Mens hearts, and invite them to humiliation , that these are but fore-runners of more dreadful scourges.

#### XI *Exercise.*

*To resist all sorts of Temptations ; an Exercise peremptorily commanded, Jam.*

1. 12, 13. Jam. 4. 7. 1 Pet. 5. 8, 9. Ephes. 5. 15. Hebr. 12. 4. Temptations must try our courage, and discover what mettle we are made of. Temptations are as necessary, as difficulties in getting an Estate, and their greatness doth but whet our appetite to overcome them : Without Temptations, the way to Life would be broad and easie ; and were it not for these , every Fool could go to Heaven. They that dream of Feather-Beds in the way to Happiness, know not what Temptations are ; and were Men but sensible, what resisting of Temptations means, they would not play the fool, and fancy that a slovenly belief in Jesus Christ will spread open to them the Gates of Everlasting Mercy. The Conquest of Temptations makes the great difference between a true Believer, and a Hypocrite ; and there is not a surer sign, that a Man is perishing , than his being loath to encounter with these Enemies.

Most Men complain of Temptations, and yet there are but few , that do oppose them ; and the generality are so besotted, as to imagine, that nothing is a Temptation , but what prompts them to open profaneness , and some notorious impiety. Temptations no doubt may come

come from Friends, as well as from Enemies ; and a Father, or a Mother , may be a Tempter, as well as our greatest Adversary. Temptations may arise from our selves, as well, as from strangers, and our own Bosoms may harbour Traytors, as much, as Extrinsick Objects. And indeed there are no Temptations so dangerous, as those that come from within ; and the Devil himself could do us no hurt, but that our own Hearts do second his fatal Enterprise. Outward Objects can only present themselves to our Minds, but it's our Minds, make the first motion to Transgression. He that resists his evil thoughts, resists the strongest Rebels ; and what can all the other assaults signify, while the Mind is guarded from Invasion ?

It is not a saint-hearted resistance, that will disperse these Insects ; and he that is unresolved , and will , and will not, makes the Prince of the Air believe, that he hath no serious purposes. Here nothing but boldness will do good , and he that by weak sallies means to repulse this Flying Army of the Devil , doth but make himself an object of their scorn. When young *Hilarion* began to be troubled with unclean thoughts, and did not know

know yet, how to resist them, the innocent Lad fell a beating his Breast, till he made it sore ; and though that was not the onely remedy , yet it shew'd that he was in good earnest resolv'd to oppose them. Of all the Temptations of the Devil , there is none that he values so much , as those that are levelled either against our venturing on the power of Godliness, or against continuance in Seriousness.

1. Such as are levell'd against our venturing on the power of Godliness. The Devil is content , we should play about the outsides of Religion, in the Subburbs of Devotion , in the Anti-chamber to true Piety ; as long as he can keep us from the Banqueting-House, the Banner whereof is Love, he can bear with our little acts of Worship , and dispense with our playing with Religion. The inconsiderable services which proceed onely from custom, he doth not value much ; and he is content we should use a Form of Godliness, being sensible, that Hypocrisie will damn as soon, as more open Debaucheries.

2. Such as are levelled against our holding out in Seriousness, or Continuance in it. He knows to whom the Crown is

is promised, even to him that's faithful unto death, and hath seen God set the Diadem of Righteousness on the heads of those that have continued with Christ Jesus in his Temptations. He knows the Scripture, and is sensible, that the Man that holds out to the last, will certainly enjoy the delights of God's Bosom; and therefore to conquer such a Man, that labours hard for Salvation, and to stop him in his progress, he looks upon, as his proudest Victory. Antiquity hath expressed it by this *Apologue*. Lucifer having sent out his Officers to fill the World with Death, and Ruine, they all went on their several Errands. Upon their return, he demands an account of their proceedings, What mischief they had done, What Plagues they had scattered, and What Calamities they had sent among affrighted Mortals. One of them more forward, than the rest, replied, He had been a fortnight wandring about, and at last had overturned some Merchants Ships at Sea, insomuch that both Men and Goods were lost. The Prince of Darkness enraged at his laziness, instead of a reward, gave him a hundred Lashes, because he had done no more hurt all that time. Another Spirit stands

stands forth, and boasts; That he had been for a month together contriving, how to set such a City on fire, and had at last effected it; and he also was severely punished for his idleness, and neglect of accomplishing his Design sooner. At last comes forth a third, that had been forty years absent, and being ask'd, How he had spent his time, and how he had promoted the Interest of the black Empire, answer'd, These forty years have I been tempting such a Religious Man to Fornication, and have at last prevailed, and at this time he wallows securely in his sin. *Beelzebub* immediately rises from his Throne, hugs the Fiend, embraces the Child of Darkness, and with Rhetorick fetcht from Hel', commends him before all the howling Crew, as having done a greater exploit after forty years travel, than the other by afflicting and consuming so many Men, and Ships, and Houses in a few days, or weeks. The Moral of the Fable is no other, but this, That if he can make a sincere Believer weary of his Heavenly-mindedness, and burning Zeal to God's Glory, he values that Injury more, than if he tempted a thousand Reprobates to greater Impieties.

Alas ! What great Conquest is it, to  
O per-

*The Best Exercise.*

perswade the Proud to Covetousnes, or  
the Drunkard to Adultery ? The Wretch  
was his before, and there is nothing in  
the Temptation to gratifie his Envy, and  
haughtines ; but to stop the Man that  
runs well, to make him end in the Flesh,  
that hath begun in the Spirit, and to  
make him turn Enemy, that before was a  
Disciple ; This is great, and answers the  
proud Designs of that Hellish Monarch.  
Pyrates do not meddle with a poor, and  
empty Fisherboat, but when Ships come  
richly laden, full of precious Wares, then  
they bestir themselves, and take pains to  
master it : So the Devil, when he sees a  
Soul richly laden with Fruits, sees a Man  
hath got a vast stock together , of Alms,  
and Prayers, and other Virtues, upon  
him he sets, and nothing pleases him,  
like robbing such a person of his Treasure.  
The empty Traveller fears no Robbers ;  
The Beggar sleeps securely in his Cott-  
age ; The Shepherd is not afraid of  
Highway-men ; The Indigent Day-La-  
bourer needs not lock up his Doors at  
night ; But the Man that's Rich, Weal-  
thy, and abounds in Gold , whose Purse  
is full , and whose Coffers are ready to  
burst with the weight of Money , that's  
the Man , that hath reason to be afraid  
of

Vid. Chry-  
soft. Epist.  
ad Demet.  
Virg.

of Enemies. So it is with Grace, and Holiness. The Holier Men are, the more they may expect the Devils assaults ; and the richer their Souls are in Faith, and Good Works, the more they may look for the rage of this Roaring Lyon ; for nothing is a greater eye-sore to him, than *Eve* in Paradise, and a Soul encircled with Celestial Glory ; and nothing stings him more, than that a Creature made a little lower than the Angels, should be in a probability of being placed in the same Form with Angels.

To resist these two grand Temptations, is the Intent of this Exercise ; which consists, 1. In arming our selves with the Word of God. 2. In praying for help and assistance from above against such assaults. 3. In getting others to pray for us, and to counsel us. 4. In being more cautious for the future, in case the Temptation do prevail.

1. *In arming our selves with the Word of God*; With this Sword Christ cut the Devil's Temptations asunder ; with this Shield the Apostles weathered his fiercest Tempests. With this Helmet the Saints of old blunted his sharpest Arrows ; and he that hath no skill at this Weapon, may resist but weakly, fight but with feeble

O 2 hands,

hands, and at the best cannot hold out long. These holy Oracles are the Arms, wherewith the Lord of Hosts will have us engage Legions of Devils, whole Armies of Lusts, and all the Troops of the Worlds Enticements, and Flatteries; and that you may know, how this is to be done, I cannot satisfie you better, than by setting before you the noble example

Vid. Hieron. Vit. St. Paul. c. 15, 16, 17. of St. Paula, whose resistance St. Jerome, who was intimately acquainted with her, describes in this manner.

When she was tempted, to give sparingly to the Matth. 5. 7. Poor, she presently replied, *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.* When tempted to revile those that reviled her, her thoughts were the same with

Psal. 39. 1. the Psalmist's, *I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue; I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.* In crosses, and disappointments, when tempted to re-

Rom. 5. 4. pining, her voice was, *Tribulation worketh patience, and patience hope, and hope makes not ashamed.* When tempted to impatience, she cryed, *I have heard thee in an acceptable time, in the day of Salvation have I succoured thee.* When tem-

Isa. 49. 1. panted in her frequent Sickneses, to complain, she checkt the motion with this, *When*

When I am weak, then am I strong ; and again, As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our Consolation also aboundeth by Christ. When in grief, she was tempted to mourn, like one without hope, she cried, Why art thou cast down, O my Soul, Psal. 42. 11. and why art thou disquieted within me ? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my Countenance, and my God. When in danger, she was tempted to mistrust God's Providence, this was her Language, Whoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross, and follow me. When she had lost all her outward Means, and was tempted to doubt of Gods Goodness, and to question his Justice, she said, What shall it profit a Man, if he gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul ? or what shall a man give in exchange for his Soul ? And again, Naked came I from my Mothers Womb, and naked shall I return thither; the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away : Blessed be the Name of the Lord. When the Beloved Toxotius, her Husband, died, and she was tempted to despair, this came into her mind, and with this she checkt the ill suggestion ; He that loves Father and Mother, and consequently Husband, or Children, more than

Matth. 10.  
2 Cor. 1. 5.  
Matth. 16.  
24.  
Matth. 16.  
26.  
Job 1. 21.  
Matth. 10.  
37.

*than me, is not worthy of me.* When some charged her with madness, because of her excessive love to Christ, and she was tempted to give them unhandsome Language, thus she stopt her self, *We are made a spectacle to Angels and to Men, we are Fools for Christ his sake, being defamed, we entreat.* Thus this excellent Matron overcame Temptations, and the Enemy could fix nothing that was ill, upon her, because she was provided with Arrows from the Quiver of the Holy Ghost.

2. *In Praying against Temptations.* This hath in all Ages been counted part of this Exercise; and he that considers with what force Temptations come upon us sometimes, will believe it necessary to call in the Divine Arm for our assistance. This was the command of him, who was tempted in all things as we our selves, yet without sin, *Matth. 26. 41.* and what is impossible with Men, is easily effected by him, whose Power cannot by searching be found out. Nothing can be difficult to Omnipotence; and as dreadful as some Temptations seem, if the help of Gods Spirit be called down by fervent Prayer, they'll dissolve, and melt, as Wax before the Fire: for as Flies never

never settle upon a Pot , that's throughly heated, so Temptations fix not on the Man, whose heart is enflamed by earnest Prayer, said *Pimenius*. A good Man, saith another , must fancy , that on one Pashas. c. side of him there is Fire , on the other <sup>39.</sup> Water, and as often, as he finds the House on fire , he must quench it with the Water , *i. e.* when-ever any evil thought rises in his mind , he must have recourse to his Prayer , and extinguish it.

In these Prayers, the chief thing to be begg'd of God, is power and courage to overcome the Temptation , not freedom from all Temptations: for though it's lawful enough in some cases, to beg, that Satan's Angel may depart from us, especially where the Temptation hinders <sup>2 Cor. 12.</sup> <sub>8.</sub> in the conscientious discharge of our duty ; yet for the most part it's safer to pray , that the Temptation may not overcome us, than that it may totally leave us. For Temptations make us watchful , help to polish our Souls , and advance our Assurance of Salvation : For indeed, how shall we know, we have the Graces, and Fruits of God's Spirit, without Temptations make the tryal , *&c* except by our resisting we learn to know,

that we have not received the Grace of God in vain. It was therefore no ill advice, which one *Pastor* gave to a Man, who intended for Seriousness, and prayed hard, that God would remove all evil Suggestions from him, and accordingly was heard, and began to be calm and easie. Go, saith he to him, and beg of God, that these Enemies may return and pursue thee by Temptations, for this will make thy Soul grow, and signally advance in Holiness : which counsel the young Man followed, and when he found himself assaulted again by evil motions, he pray'd no longer that he might be deliver'd from the opportunity of striving, but to be endow'd with patience to endure the Fight, and to vanquish the Temptation.

3. *In getting others to pray for us ;* Our single Prayers many times will do no good, and God wisely doth not grant the Blessing, we pray for, on purpose, that we may get others to joyn with us in our Prayers; so did St. Paul, 2 Thes. 3. 1, 2. 2 Cor. 1. 11. Joynt Forces do storm Heaven, and when Prayers mount up, as *David* went into the Temple, with the multitude that keeps Holy day, the Almighty bows down his Ear, and sends them

them away with a Blessing. But then he that desires a Religious man to pray for him, that God would give him Grace to conquer, must joyn his own earnest endeavours with that good mans Prayer, else he doth but mock God, and the Holy man too, whose pains in Prayer he desires. And to this purpose, I will set down a passage in *Ruffinus*. A young man being much assaulted with thoughts of Uncleanness, or Lasciviousness, went to a Divine of great Integrity and Seriousness, intreating him to supplicate for him at the Throne of Grace, that he might be Master of his Passions: The honest man promised he would, and accordingly begg'd God's assistance in his behalf, day and night. The young man still visited him, and bid him double and treble his Supplications, for as yet he found no good, and desired him to sollicite the Almighty with very great importunity, and so the good Preacher did; But finding the young man returning ever and anon, with the same Complaints, he began to take on, and mourn before God, and admire, that God who had formerly heard his Orisons, should deny him Audience now; But while he was thus musing, he fell asleep, and in a dream,

Ruffin.  
Vit. Patr.  
L. 3. c. 13.

dream, saw that young man sitting on a Chair, and some evil Spirits ; in the shape of Beautiful Women, dancing before him ; at which motions he expressed some Delight, and Satisfaction ; and while he thus pleased himself with the sight, an Angel came down from Heaven, and chid him severely, because he did not rise at the dangerous spectacle, throw himself down upon his Face, and wrestle with God in Prayer , in order to a Conquest. With that , the Religious Divine awakes , and from the Dream, concludes the reason, why God had not heard his Prayers , sends for the young man , expositulates with him, and tells him ; Friend, I am sensible, my Prayers can do thee no good, for except thou wilt watch against thy unclean Thoughts , and take pains thy self. and go about the work , like a man resolved , to be rid of the Temptation, neither mine, or other mens Prayers, will be of any great advantage to thee ; For let a Physician administer Remedies, and Medecines never so proper, if the Patient will needs eat that which will do him hurt, and will not abstain from things that are his bane, all the Physicians Care and Labour must be lost : The young man heard him patiently,

tiently, and being prickt at the heart, threw himself down at the Preachers Feet, confessed his Folly, and began to afflict and mortifie himself, and now the Temptation abates, and he is cured.

This desiring others to pray for us, when assaulted by strong Temptations, helps us to defeat that stratagem of the Devil, whereby he keeps us from revealing the thoughts of our Hearts, and the temptations we lie under, to those who are able by their Advice and Counsel, to relieve us; How many Souls have been restored to Joy again, that have broke through this Snare, and open'd, and disburthen'd their grief to some faithful Minister of the Gospel, which before oppressed, and was ready to sink them into self-destruction! So have I read of a Ruffin.  
distressed Christian, who being assaulted lib 3. Sect. 57.  
with blasphemous Thoughts, attempted often to go to Divines, and consult with them about his Spiritual wants, but still something or other hindred him from making his secret trouble known; at last meeting with an eminent Saint, one Poémen, who seeing consternation in his Face, ask'd him what ail'd him, he discover'd to him the Worm that gnaw'd his Heart; and on a sudden he found such calmness and

and serenity in his Spirit, that he seem'd quite another man, which by degrees increased , as he follow'd the good mans Counsel, which was, That whenever the Devil assaulted him with Blasphemy , he should reply , *Let thy Blasphemy, Devil, be on thine own head, for I'll have nothing to do with it.*

Luk. 22.  
32.

4. *In rising again, and being more cautious for the future, in case a Temptation doth prevail.* By this rising again, I do not mean, going round like Witches, in a circle of Repenting , and Sinning, and Sinning and Repenting ; but if after long and strong opposition, we fall against our wills, not to lye still one moment in the sin, but to get up with speed , and put on greater Resolutions , and double our Diligence, that we may not be surpriz'd again ; Thus did St. Peter, the ill company in the High Priests Hall, presses hard upon him , and fear of being abused by them, prevails with him to deny that Master, whom he saw in misery. But he hath no sooner done the Fact, but his Heart smites him, and he goes out and weeps bitterly ; and after this no torment, no pain, no contempt, no frown of great Men, no smiles of Princes can persuadē him to the same sin again ; not *Herod's*

rod's Imprisonment , not the stern looks of the High Priests, not the indignation of the *Sadducees*, nor Nero's cruelty ; after this, he is so stedfast, that his Faith vies with Rocks, and becomes like Mount *Sion*, which can never be moved.

It's like *Cæsarius*, the famous *Nazianzen*'s Brother, might be tempted by the preferments, *Julian* the Apostate heaped upon him, to comply with the ill-natured Emperour in his humour, and grow mealy-mouth'd, and cowardly in speaking for Christ , and vindicating his Divinity and Glory ; But upon his Brothers Letter to him ; behold, how readily the great man rises from his slumber , tells the Apostate , that he'll keep his preferments, upon the condition of dissembling, no longer, forsakes the Glories of the Court, leaves his Treasurers place, and prefers Poverty, Contempt, and Ignominy, before the Acclamations and Salutations of the multitude, and in this despicable condition ends his days.

So did *Ecebolius*, *Julians* offers tempt him to desertion ; he falls , accepts of the Wicked Monarch's Favour , but here he could not rest long , something within gnawed his Heart ; he rises, prostrates himself before God's people , calls to

Vid. *Greg.*

*Naz. Epist.*

17.

Vid. *So-*  
*crat. I. 3.*

*c. II.*

to them, *Tread upon me, trample on this unsavoury Salt*; and after this, we hear no more of his fickleness and inconstancy.

To lie still in a notorious sin, is to sleep on a Dunghill, and which is worse, *to make our Bed in Hell*, but he that like *David*, makes his fall, an opportunity of being more serious, gets by his sin, and extracts an Oil out of that stinking Weed, which gives his Limbs new strength, and vigor, and alacrity.

This is to exercise our selves in resisting Temptations; and oh that the dull world would understand, what a stress the Holy Ghost lays upon this Labour! they would not then let Temptations ride in Triumph into their Souls, they would not open the Gates to these Locusts to let them in, but come out with Swords and Staves against them, as against Thieves and Murtherers. They would go another way to work, than now they do. It's a wonderful thing to see, how awkwardly Men go about this Conquest; a serious Spectator must needs think they have no mind to it, and that what they do, is for no other end, but to satisfie the secret stings, and twitches of a frightened Conscience.

When

When men heretofore took delight in this Exercise, they studied, which way they might overcome Temptations, and made it the great object of their contrivance, how to be eminent in this Victory, how to silence the hellish Dogs, that bark'd at them, and how to convince even the Devil himself, that from the bottom of their Hearts, they abhorred the sins they were provoked to : When they were tempted to unlawful Lusts, they resisted the motion by great Abstinence, and hard Fare, and harder Lodging ; When they had a mind to resist a Temptation to Covetousness, they crossed Flesh and Blood, and gave away more than they could spare ; When they were minded to resist a Temptation to Anger, they did good to the Offender ; When they would resist a Temptation to Revenge, they would watch an opportunity to shew their Love and Compassion to the person, that had done them the injury ; When they resisted a Temptation to Quarrel, or Litigiousness, they decessed from their own Right ; When they would resist a Temptation of Vain Glory, they would do something, that should render them contemptible ; When a Temptation to Pride, they call'd  
to

to mind their Imperfections, their Defects in Grace, and how short they fell of the perfection of greater Saints. Their Conquest cost them Pains, and he that takes this way, discovers his sincerity in the opposition.

*Rev. 2. 7.  
11. 17, 27.  
Rev. 3. 5,  
12, 21. c  
21, 3, 4, 7.*

Who can read of *eating of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God*; Of *not being hurt by the Second death*; Of *feeding on the hidden Manna, and receiving the White Stone, and in the Stone a new Name, written, which no man knoweth, saving he, that receives it, of Ruling Nations with a Rod of Iron*; Of *possessing the Morning Star*; Of *having his Name writ in the Book of Life*; Of *having the Honour of being confess'd, and own'd before God the Father and his Angels*; Of *being clothed in White Raiment*; Of *being made a Pillar in the Temple of God, whence he shall go out no more*; Of *having the Name of God engraven upon him, and the Name of the City of God, which is the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of Heaven from God*; Of *inheriting all things, and of being freed from Fears, and Pain, and Death, and Sorrow, and Curses, and Darkness*; Blessings promised by the Holy Ghost to Men, who resist, and overcome: Who can read, I say,

of

of all these, and feel no warmth, no heat to dare Temptations , and to strive for mastery ? But then, Christians, if you resist, let nothing interrupt your resistance, but death it self. Remember who it is, that cries, *When the righteous turns from his righteousness, and commits iniquity , he shall die in his sin , and his righteousness which he hath done, shall not be remembred,* Vid R. Mose Cor. duero tract. de anima. c.7.

Ezek. 3.20. To resist unto Blood is something, but to resist unto Death is more : After Death the Enemy can tempt no more, but while there is Life he will not give over ; without we resist as long as he tempts , we expose our selves to his Fury, and he will tempt, while we are above ground. If we are not tired with resisting, we make him despair of success, and his Assaults grow weaker , the more stiff we are in our Duty. I conclude this Exercise with the Advice of the Pious *Syncretica*; The Devil, not being able to make people weary of walking in the ways of God by Poverty , tries what Riches will do ; and if he prevails not by Calumnies, and Reproaches, he'll make an attempt by Praife and Honour ; Where he cannot seduce by carnal Delights, there he discourages by the tediousnes and laboriousness of Religi-

Vid. Pelag.  
lib. 7 c. 16.

on; many times by sicknes , and long-lasting miseries he tries whether he can discompose good men, in their Love to their Gracious Redeemer. But, Christian, let thy Body be cut and wounded, fry in burning Feavers, and tormented with excessive Thirst ; if thou art a sinner, remember the torments of another World, and the everlasting Fire, and this well keep thee from fainting under all the crosses and miseries here; Rejoyce, because God doth visit thee, and have ever that memorable Saying in thy mouth ; *The Lord hath chasten'd , and corrected me sore, but he hath not given me over unto death.* If thou art Iron, this Fire will burn away thy Rust. If thou art a Saint, and sufferest such things, from these great Conquests, thou wilt be advanced, and promoted to greater Dignities in Heaven. If thou art Gold, this Furnace will make thee finer. Is Satans Angel given thee to buffet thee ? Rejoyce to think, whom thou art like, for this was St. Paul's Affliction , and St. Paul's Glory will fall to thy share.

Psal. 118.  
18.

*XII Exercise.*

*To stand in awe of God , when we are alone, and no creature sees us. An Exercise*

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cise Commanded, *Psal. 139. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.*  
*Psal. 4. 4. Psal. 10. 13, 14. Heb. 4. 13.*  
One would think that the bare belief of the Being of God, should be a sufficient Argument to any man to fear him, when he is alone, and behave himself with that Reverence and Decency, he would use, were the greatest visible Monarch of this World present with him. But, alas ! the generality of men dare to do that in private, when none, but God and they are together, which they would be afraid to do before the meanest slave ; and their Minds, after their Bodies are once lock'd up, are as busie to plot mischief and wickedness, as if none, no not God himself could look into those Cabinets. They dare to think that before God, which they would tremble to utter before men ; and harbour things in their hearts, in the sight of the Almighty, which they would not for a world, men should know of, yet they matter not whether God knows it, or no ; and this is satisfaction enough to them, that they can hide their vain imaginations from their Neighbours. How does the Thief rejoice, when he finds no person in the Room, that can disturb him ! How is the Fornicators, and Adulterers Fancy tickled,

led, to see, that the Chamber, or the House he is in, with his Harlot, is void of company! Sots, and Fools! The God that gave them Life, and Being, and who supports them every minute, looks upon them, and mourns, and they regard it not!

A Christian is a man of another temper, and exercises himself unto Godliness, when he is alone, as well as when he converses with his Neighbours; nay, is more industrious to please his kind and merciful Master, when retired from the sight of Men, than he ordinarily is, when the World looks upon him. He is afraid of sin, though there be no Magistrate by, to over-awe him, and durst not commit any thing, that is offensive to God, or injurious to his Neighbour, were he in a Desart or in a Denn. He doth good cheerfully, while none but God looks upon him, and is glad he hath an opportunity of doing it in secret; because he would not be so much as suspected to be guilty of Hypocrisie. He is as modest in his Closet, as in his Dining-room, and behaves himself with the same gravity in a Vault, that he would do in his Parlour. He is sensible no place can escape an All-seeing Eye, and that there is

is no corner so secret, but the Father of Lights shines into it. He remembers that God will call him to an Account for secret Sins, as well as for notorious Offences; and therefore hath the same veneration for his Holiness, when all men are gone from him, as he hath when he is surrounded with society. He lives in the fence of Gods Omnipresence, and whether he is on a Hill, or in the Valley, God is the same to him; The place he knows, makes no variation in Gods Purity, and where-ever the man is, God cannot be far from him. He pities, or smiles at the Sinner that flatters himself, that God sees him not, because he lurks in a Cave, and nothing appears so absurd to him, as to fancy, that he that made the Eye, should not pierce into the remo-  
test corner.

Indeed, not to fear God, when we are alone, is not to fear him at all, and he that shuns undecencies before Men only, shews that they are the Gods, whom he serves. Sobriety before men onely, is a sign, that nothing but Credit and Interest keeps us in awe; and except we dread the very appearance of evil, when God alone is with us, we are but a better sort of Atheists. What doth it signifie, to be

*The Best Exercise.*

lieve a God, and to walk, as if there were none? and to what purpose is it to adore him, when his greatness can have no influence, upon our Consciences? To see in secret is Gods Prerogative, and we then deny it, when in secret we dare break his Law, and affront his Glory. He could not be God, if he took no notice of our Thoughts and Actions, when we are alone; and therefore not to fear him when we are in private, is to say with the Fool, There is none; To be delighted with unlawful Objects in our minds, while God looks on, is as great an irreverence, as if a man should spue before a Prince; nay, considering the vast distance between a mortal King, and the Immortal God, infinitely greater, and therefore he that stands more in awe of a Prince, than of his God, doth as good as Blaspheme; for it is a tacit Assertion, that Dust and Ashes deserves greater Honour, than the King of Heaven. Every Prayer of such a man, will be a witness against him in the last day; for in every

*Si purpura-tus Deum ita metue-ret, ut Regem, Angelus foret.*  
Saad. Rosar. Pers. c. i. p. m. 67.

Prayer, he acknowledges God's All-seeing Purity, and by that acknowledgment, condemns himself, for not living in private, like a man that did profess, and believe that Truth.

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He that thinks he fears God, when he is careless of his Honour, and Omnipresence in secret, may as well think he loves his Father and Mother, when he calls them all to nought, and slighteth them, like dirt under his Shoo's; and indeed, if ever any man was guilty of Hypocrisie, such a man that believes God sees him, and acts as if his Eyes were shut, must be a most notorious dissembler. It is a perfect contradiction to believe Gods Omnipotence, and not to stand in awe of it, and the contrariety of the Mind and Actions in this case, is so great, that did we not judge of Mens Wisdom by their worldly Prudence, we should think such a man rather distracted, than impious. If the whole World were present with us, and the whole race of Mankind were within our view, it is not so much, as when God is present with us, being alone, for the Great Creator of all these men, is with us; He, on whose shadow the vast Legions of Angels wait; He, at whose Name all Creatures bow their knees; and whose Hand hath made all things, is with us at such times; and he that is afraid of the Creature, why should not he stand in awe of the Creator? Is the Tool a greater thing than the Workman? or the Pot of greater

consequence , than the Potter that did make it ? and though we see him not with our Eyes, yet our Minds may perceive, and feel him ; and though he doth not justle us in our walks, or rest, yet if we be sensible, that he is, we cannot but be sensible , if we will, that he is present too. It's not want of Power, but want of Will , that makes us careless of taking notice of him ; for we cannot own our common Principles, or any Dictates of Nature, but we must own his Presence ; and we had as good deny our own Being, as deny his standing by us where-ever we are, and being displeased with the sins, we practice.

God is every-where present , that we may always bear his Image in our minds ; Indeed, how can we forget him, that doth every moment remember our frame, and remember our wants and necessities, and doth not forget our work , and labour of Love ? What a mighty favour do we count it, if a King doth think of us, or admits us into his Presence ; and shall not we think it a wonderful mercy, that the King of Glory , the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace is never absent from us, and is pleased always to take notice of us ? The sick man receives Comfort,

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if a friend do visit him ; and should not our Souls rejoice, our weak, our sinful Souls, that God doth always look upon them, and takes their concerns into consideration ? If a Prince vouchsafe a favourable look to a Servant , he thinks himself happy ; and shall not we count our selves so , when our God never turns away his Eyes from us ? Behold, how the vulgar run to see a King pass by ; Our God not onely passes by us, but this mighty God remains with us always, every moment encircles us with the beams of his Majesty, and shall not we stand amazed at his Brightness ? Nay, look how men hasten to see a Monster , some unknown *African Beast* , and shall not our hearts leap to think, that an incomprehensible Beauty is continually about us ? The Queen of *Sheba* comes from a far, to behold the Jewish King in his Glory , and when she sees him, wonders ; we every day behold a far greater , and far more splendid Monarch ; and do we make nothing of it ? How ! shall not we work to do him service, that works all our Blessings for us ? How can we deal worse with a man that hates us , than by not looking on him, when he meets us ? Is God our enemy, that we care not for behol-

holding him in secret , when he stands before us in our Closets ? The Glory of God surrounds us, penetrates our Souls, and Bodies, more than the Sun-beam doth the Chrystal stome , and shall not we tremble, when we are alone, at so great a Majesty ? The Presence of Gods Wifdom provides for us , and sees, that we may want nothing, is always busie about us, either to direct , or to reward us ; nay, God doth not trust his Angels with this Province , but himself watches over us every moment, every hour like a Nurse, he carries us in his everlasting Arms. Have we such a constant Benefactor continually about us, and are not we concerned more at his Presence ?

Behold, Christian, when thou art alone , that God is with thee , and in thee, and stands by thee, before whom, all Angels vail their Faces ; at whose Presence Devils tremble ; who fills Heaven and Earth with his Glory ; that God is with thee , who is altogether lovely, the Center of thy Happiness , before whom all Nations are as Grashoppers, as the small Dust of the Ballance , and as a drop at the bottom of a Bucket , who by his Providence, maintains thy Soul in life, charges the Devil not to drag thee into Hell,

Hell, commands the Powers of Darkness, not to molest thee or murther thee, takes care of thy Self, thy Wife, and Children, and watches day and night over all that thou hast, that preserves thy House from being burnt, thy Children from being drowned, thy Cattle from rotting, thy Barns from being consum'd by Lightning ; that Commands, and thou takest thy Rest, speaks the Word, and no danger must come nigh ; keeps thee as the Apple of thine own Eye, and bids his Angels to carry thee in their hands ; This God, This Beneficial God, This Immense, This Infinite, This Bountiful, This Gracious, This Munificent, This Liberal, This Charitable Being is with thee, and about thee every-where, especially, when thou art by thy self, for then there is none with thee, but he, and wilt not thou be conscientious in his Presence ?

Was ever Ingratitude like this ! The most ungrateful slave, however he rails against his Benefactor behind his back, yet is afraid to do it in his Presence ; and will you revile God to his Face ? What is your sinning against him, but reviling of him ? What is your acting contrary to his Will, but abusing of him, and if he be in the Room with you, looks you in the

the Face when you do so, do not you reproach him to his Face? Aye, but Man would be angry with us, say you, if we should abuse him, when he is present with us, and bring us into trouble; God never punishes us when we sin against him in private, and none but he with us. Disingenuous Wretches! Is your Eye therefore evil because God is good? Must you be vain, because God is patient? Foolish, because he suffers long? Must you sin, because he doth not punish, or transgress his Laws, because by his Mercies he would oblige you to Repentance? Will you slight him, because he is kind, or undervalue him, because he carest you to your Happiness?

Sinner, Did the Lord Jesus appear to thee in a visible shape, while thou art alone in thy Closet; Wouldst not thou behave thy self humbly, modestly, and seriously, and suite thy Thoughts and Actions, to the Presence of so Glorious a Being? Why, Christs Divinity is with thee now, and cannot his Divinity have the same influence upon thy Spirit, that his Humanity would have? Is not his Divine, above his Humane Nature, and is not the Deity more excellent, than the most Glorious Image, or Representation?

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Inconsiderate man ! If thou are minded to offend God, get Curtains, that can hide his sight ; for if he see, what madness is it, to conspire against him, before him ? Go, get where God sees not , and then do what thou wilt : God stands with infinite Ears, and Eyes, and Understanding about thee ; and with as strong application of Spirit , as if he left contemplation of himself, to pierce thee with all his beams ; and for him to see thy Disloyalties, is a greater shame, than if they were represented on all the Theaters of the World.

The Soul that lives in the thoughts of Gods Presence, prepares for her richest Comforts ; for how can he want Joy, that is sensible the Fountain of Joy is with him ? How can he want Support, that is sensible , that the God of all Consolation is with him ? How can he want a refuge, or hiding-place, that is sensible he hath the rock of ages in the room with him ? The Palm-tree bears Fruit , when another Tree of the same nature is set by it ; how much more will a Soul bear Fruit , that's sensible , the Great Husbandman that hath planted Heaven and Earth, and gives Sap and Nourishment to all his Creatures , is with her , and with-

within her, and that that Sun of Righteousness is continually warming her with his lively beams. Have not you seen a stone thrown into the Air, make all the haste it can, to return to its Center; so whenever such a Soul is justled out of her Orb, either by the World, or the Devil; the God that lives in her, forces her to return presently to her Center; even to that God, in whom she hath all that heart can wish, or reason can desire.

*Fear the Lord all ye his Saints, for there is no want to them that fear him,* saith David, Psal. 34. 9. The Soul that fears him from a fence of his Omnipresence, is that Soul, that can lack nothing, for it can lack no strength to arrive to the highest degrees of Holiness, for this fence will call it away from all absurd, and undecent actions, will not suffer her to fall into sin; and like the Hands of Angels, preserve her Foot from running against a stone; as a large spreading Oak, deeply rooted in the Earth, mocks the rage of winds; so a Soul, in whom this Sence is fixed, can sing securely, under all the outrages of Hellish Furies. *My Flesh trembles for fear of thee;* so we read Psal. 119. 120. The Septuagint render it *Fix or nail my flesh with thy Fear, because* the

the Hebrew Word signifies both ; and the וְנַדּוּ Word thus taken, is very emphatical ; for as the Man ; whose Hands and Feet, and Body are nailed to a Tree, can stir no-where ; so he that lives in a mighty fence of the Almighty's Presence , dares not stir from the streight way, or from the paths of Righteousnes : Such a man thinks himself obliged to work out his Salvation, with fear and trembling ; and when Flesh and Bloud would have him be angry, or laugh at a sin , or defile himself in secret, he dares not ; how can I commit this wickedness, and sin against God, saith he, for God sees me ; Where this Sense is, there Envy must be gone, love of Money must take its leave, and depart, Wrath and Malice dares not stay, Lust, and sinful Concupiscence must die, and all irrational Passions must expire ; This makes the *Herb of Grace* culminate, and spread its wholsome Leaves ; This makes the Art of Praying easie, and draws forth streams of Tears. By neglect of this Sense the World was lost, and by this Sense the World must be recover'd. *Eve*, though she had the understanding of an Angel, yet at that time when she eat the forbidden Fruit, she look'd not upon that God , that bid her

*The Best Exercise.*

her shun the Tree, and so she fell. By looking on God where-ever we are, we enter into a *Tower* which Enemies may besiege, but cannot take, or batter. In a word, the most effectual means, either to obtain or keep, or recover the Grace of God, is this Sense of Gods Omnipresence. This is a Lanthorn to our Feet, and a Light unto our Paths ; and like Fire thrown into a hedge of Reeds, burns up the evil Thoughts, that do annoy us ; so that the Man in *Pelagius* was certainly in the right , whose Motto it was, that looking upon God, in all places , and all Companies, and remembering his Presence, is as necessary, as our breath, or the Blood that Circulates in our Veins.

XIII *Exercise.*

*To do all things to God's Glory;* An Exercise commanded i Cor.10.31. Colos. 3. 17. Ephes. 5. 20. i Thes. 5. 18. When I say all things, I totally exclude all sinful Actions, for no man can intentionally commit Sin, to God's Glory. God indeed will glorifie his Justice one day in the Sinners Condemnation ; and the perverse Transgressor , who will not Glorifie God now , as God , shall hear the Saints one day Admire, and Adore him

him for his just Proceedings against obstinate Offenders; and God many times from a Great Sinner makes an Admirable Convert, but this doth not justifie a Mans Sinning to Gods Glory. He that sins, sins to God's dishonour, and the man that transgresses his Commands, seeks to bring a disparagement on the most spotless Being. But, by all things, I mean, all Actions that have a Natural or Moral Goodness in them; and this Exercise consists, 1. *In giving Thanks for every Blessing we enjoy.* 2. *In doing all things, whether Civil, or Religious, with a good and holy design, or with an intent to promote God's Glory.*

1. *In giving Thanks for every Blessing we enjoy.* He that is not sensible of the great necessity of this Exercise, hath never heard of what *Moses, David, St. Paul,* and the whole Army of Saints have done, and he that knows not what it means, hath certainly forgot, that God is his Creator, and he his Creature. Not to give God thanks for the Blessings we possess, is to be a Beast, nay worse than a Beast, for *the very Dragons Praise God in their kind,* as we read, *Psalm 148. 7.* And yet to thank him without consideration of what we do, adds nothing to

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our happiness, no more than a *Parrot* repeating some words out of a *Psalms*, makes him any whit the more Rational. To give God thanks, requires attention, of the Mind, and the Man that Praises him, must seriously break forth into Astonishments at his Goodness. To say, I Thank God, and not to feel what I say, is an argument of Carelessness, and there cannot be a greater sign of Stupidity, than to Command his Goodness, and not to mind what I mean by the Expression. It is a fence of mine own unworthiness must force those Praises from me, and a foresight of my own demerit oblige me to high and noble thoughts of my Great Benefactor. Every Blessing must lift up my Heart to Heaven, and every Mercy I receive, must make my Soul adore the hand that sent it. If my Lips be onely employed in the Exercise, I offer indeed the Calves of my Lips, but continue a stranger to that Living Sacrifice I am to bring, which is my reasonable Service. Not to Praise God for his Blessings, with admiration of his Bounty, is as bad, as to be dumb in his Celebrations; and there is little difference between him, that says nothing, and him that speaks, like a Man unconcern'd.

cern'd. He that in his Blessings reflects  
only on the Second Causes, whereby it  
was procured, robs God of his Honour ;  
and to ascribe any Mercy to mine own  
Wisdom or Industry, or Friends, is no  
less than Sacrilege. Nay, if I spend  
the Blessing, which was given me to do  
good with, upon mine own Lust, I am  
perfidious ; and if instead of putting it  
to those uses, for which God designed it,  
I make it serve me in my sins, I am so  
unfaithful a Steward, that I am not fit to  
be received into Everlasting Habitations.  
I must see God in every Blessing, and take  
notice of his Gracious Providence in the  
Dispensation. I must not feed on it as  
Beasts upon Grass, without regard to him,  
that made it grow ; and indeed, I cannot  
put a greater affront in this case upon  
the Almighty, than by not considering  
the operations of his hand. Every Ble-  
ssing hath the stamp of God upon it ; it  
bears his Image, and Superscription, and  
therefore it is injurious, not to give to God,  
the things that are Gods. To prize the  
various Blessings of God, I must consi-  
der, and take notice, how my wants and  
necessities are supplied, and when I see,  
wherein I do excel others, I cannot  
possibly want matter of suitable Grati-  
tude.

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But *Secondly*, The greater part of the *Exercise* is yet behind , and that is, *To do all things, whether Civil, or Religious, with a good, and holy design, and with an intent to promote God's Glory.* This is a Work which few do mind, and even many of those, that seem to do more than others, are defective in this Duty. I do not deny, but that a Man may lawfully have two ends in every action, a Spiritual and a Temporal , but the Spiritual end must be my chief end ; and that which must be the Principal Motive to such a work, must be a prospect of doing good, or being serviceable to Gods Glory. I must Preach, and Pray, and sing Psalms, to Gods Glory, and Drink, and Eate, and lie down , and Sleep , and Visit , and Discourse, and follow the Works of my Lawful Calling, to Gods Glory : When I Eat and Drink , I must not do it to please my Appetite so much , as to be more serviceable to my Master in Heaven ; When I Visit, I must have a design of Edification in it , and must resolve to drop some Savoury Discourse in the place, I go to. When I am going to take my rest, it must not be with an intent meerly to Sleep, and to refresh my Body, but chiefly with an intent, to be  
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the better able to do my Masters Work ; When I enter upon the Works of my Calling, my design must be, more to please God, and to obey his Will, than to provide for the ease and satisfaction of my Flesh ; When I rise in the Morning, I must rise with an intent to spend that day for Eternity, and whatever I do, I must do it more to please God, than to please my self ; But above all, my Religious Duties must have no other design, but that God may be glorified by them, and that his Name may be advanced, and his Honour spread, must be the great end of all my Alms, and Supplications. *Christ's Interest* must be my chiefest Interest, and I am no complete Christian, till God becomes all in all to me. To be a favourite of Heaven this must be my *Motto*, *To me to live is Christ* ; and I must not only say so, but say it with that seriousness, that I may be able to call God to Witness, that it is so. And though at every bit I eat, I cannot, and need not say, I will eat this for God, yet it's possible to mind this great end in every solemn Action, and when I sit down to eat, to intend some Glory to God, suitable to the occasion.

There is nothing makes a greater alte-

ration in our Duties, than the Design, and many a Religious performance would certainly be accepted in Heaven, if the Design were great and noble. Worldly designs prevail too often, even in the severest duties; and nothing spoiled the *Pharisees* Austerity so much, as the ill end they had in them. It was the Design, that made that vast difference between the Offerings of *Cain*, and *Abel*, *Abel's* Sacrifice being accompanied with Poverty of Spirit, with a heart sensible of the Greatness and Goodness of God, and willing to express it's gratitude to the Father of Lights, from whom every good and perfect gift descends; God vouchsafed it a gracious look; whereas *Cain's* Offerings proceeding, either from force and custom, or from complaisance to his Fathers command, was scorned, and under-valued.

God's Glory is best sought by self-contempt; and the only way to exalt our Maker, is to vilifie our selves; The viler a Man makes himself, the clearer sight he gets of God's Greatness; and he that looks upon himself as despicable dust and ashes, is most likely to behold the brightness of that God that made him. They say, That a Vessel, that hath ashes in it, will hold

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as much Water, as it would, if there were no ashes in it ; whereas if other things should be put into the Vessel , it would hold the less quantity of Water. So contempt of my self will not keep out my Exaltation of God's Glory, nor my sitting in the dust, obscure the splendor of my Creator. A Tree hath Bougns that emulate the height of Heaven, as well as Roots that sink deep into the Ground; and the deeper the Root lies, the loftier commonly are the Branches : so that he that aims at his own abasement , at the same time doth what he can, to Magnifie his Gracious Redeemer. None deserves Glory, so much, as he that wants nothing ; and there is not a better Argument, that he deserves it, than this , that he makes no profit of it. He that Glorifies God, to whom it is no advantage, doth most of all advantage himself ; and he that gives all Honour to God, and none to himself, gets more by it, than the most Ambitious Prince, that engrosses all the Glory he can,to his own Atchievements.

God's Glory, and my Profit , are Sisters, and while I am not sparing in promoting the former, the other comes in in course. God makes nothing for his Glory, but what is also profitable unto

Man ; and Mans Emolument is so linked together with God's Glory, that to seek to part them, is to attempt to part Fire, and Heat, for the one is the necessary effect of the other. As God can do nothing against his Glory, so his Perfection, and Goodness do so necessarily go together, that as the one challenges the Creatures giving him all the Glory, so the other cannot but work for the Creatures happiness.

Indeed , that is onely profitable to man, which brings Glory to God , and the onely way to mind our Profit , is to endeavour after that , which may advance Gods Glory. That man is idle, and a superfluous Creature in the World, that doth not seek Gods Glory ; for this was the use, the great use for which he was made a little lower than the Angels ; and if a mans profitableness , be to be guessed from the end, he was made for, if he declines from that end, he is altogether useless, and scarcely deserves the name of a Creature. The very being of a man imports a necessity of his advancing Gods Glory, and he that doth not study to advance it , is more fenceless, than the man, that seeks to warm himself with snow, or the Painter, that attempts

tempts to draw a Picture with a Saw of Iron ; we lose our selves, if we seek not Gods Glory , and we consider not what we do if we make any farther use of created Beings , than they are conducive to Gods Glory. All the Riches and Treasures of this World can do no good, without I glorifie God with them, and indeed I must count them all dross and dung , If I will make them instrumental to advance Gods Glory. Whatever I think, or speak , or do, must be dedicated to Gods Glory , at least that must be my general end ; and I cannot honour my self better , than by giving God the Honour due unto his Name. It is a mighty priviledge , that God will give me leave to advance his Glory, and I know not how great a favour God intends me , when he bids me to do all things in the Name of the Lord *Jesus Christ* , giving thanks unto God, and the Father through him. It is a Dignity, which the duller sort of Mankind , are not aware of, and were their eyes clearer , they would strive who should exceed the other in magnifying infinite Goodness.

If I aim at Gods Glory in all things, I cannot be impatient in Adversity ; for as

I have reason to believe, that even my Crosses will advance Gods Glory, so I must glorifie God in them, by laying my hand upon my mouth, and acknowledging him just in sending the affliction, and magnifying his Mercy, in that he did not send a greater. If I must not seek things pleasant and profitable, but onely, as they may tend to Gods Glory ; I dare not grumble under my Crofs, for I know not but I may glorifie God more by the Affliction, than by Prosperity. The Traveller that enquires for his way, is not concern'd, whether men bid him go this way, or that way, over the Plain, or through a Wood, but goes as he is directed ; and as long, as God directs me to seek, and advance his Glory , it's no great matter, whether the way that leads to it, be smooth, or uneasie, clean, or dirty, so it doth but lead me to the Mark, I am to aim at. The Patient desires health, but cares not how he comes by it , whether by bitter Potions, or by sweeter Cordials; and I do not really seek Gods Glory, except I am indifferent whether I advance it by Riches, or by Poverty, by Good report, or by Evil report. The way I must leave to God , and whether the Sea be rough or smooth, that I must

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commit to his Wise Providence , all my care must only be to arrive at the intended Harbour.

This is it, what Christ means, by bidding us take care, that *our eye may be single*, Matth. 6. 22. it must aim at one Thing only, *viz.* Gods Glory, if it looks upon more objects at once, it confounds it self, and the man, that makes use of it. There cannot be a nobler mark , than this, and there is nothing more proper for our great, and lofty Souls, than this Employment. This is to be with *Jesus* about our Fathers business, and to mind the end , for which we came into the World. This is to conform to God, and to be workers together with him in the enlarging of his Kingdom. This is it, we pray for in the famous Prayer, *Tby Kingdom come*, and we then live according to our Prayer , when the advancement of that Kingdom is not the least part of our endeavours. This is to glory in the *Lord*; and there can be no greater Commendation , than that we seek to bring all back again to the spring, or fountain, from which they had their Being. God took more care , and pains, about creating Man, than he did about other Creatures , and whereas he spoke

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the Universe into being, about man, he consults, and deliberates, how to make him after his own Image. And since Gods Perfection consists in glorifying himself, man can be man no longer, for he can be Gods Image no longer, if he doth not with all his might promote his Creators Glory.

This is to make Religion the Darling of our Souls, and he answers the great design of his Maker, who takes that care that God may be in all his Thoughts. He that doth so, shews, that he delights in God, and that God hath engrossed his chiefest Joy. Then delight in God is come to a just pitch, when the Soul is thus greedy to advance Gods Glory, and then the mind doth truely taste, how sweet, and gracious the Lord is, when Gods Honour becomes an ingredient into all its designs and purposes.

Take the Wings of the morning, O my Soul, and flie away, that thou may'st be at rest, and think how thy God hath honour'd thee; How studious hath God been of thy Glory? How hath he honoured thee by making thee an Angelical Substance, Sublime, and capable of soaring above this transitory World? How hath he honoured thee by putting all things

things under thy feet, and by making thee capable to converse with him, to all Eternity? How hath he honoured thee, in that he would not trust his Angels with the Charge of making thee, but would frame thee with his own hands, and breathe himself the breath of Life into thee? How hath he honoured thee by providing so glorious a Palace, as this lower World for thy residence, and by promising thee a nobler Building, made without hands Eternal in the Heavens? How hath he honoured thee in that he hath charged his Angels to guard thee in thy going out, and in thy coming in? Nay, how hath he honoured thee, in that he hath not spared his own Son, but hath delivered him up to be sacrificed for thy Sin, that thou mightst be capable of being exalted from Earth to Heaven? How hath he honoured thee by taking notice of thy Prayers, and Alms, and holy Labours, and by rewarding of them with Blessings great and wonderful, and such as thou durst not have aspired to, had not his Bounty prompted him to such Liberality? Hath God so honoured thee, and art not thou obliged to seek his Glory? Hath he glorified thee, and is he willing to give thee greater Glory, and wilt thou  
think

think much of glorifying him? Behold thy Dignity, behold the Honour God hath laid upon thee, and be ashamed of thy great neglect of seeking his Glory. Get up once more, and purifie thy self. Learn to love him dearly: Learn to see him in all things, and then thou wilt long for his goodness, seek his praise, breathe nothing but his honour, and be zealous for his glory.

*XIV Exercise.*

*To stir up, and to Exercise our Graces, as we have occasion,* and to grow stronger in the Grace of God; an Exercise commanded, 2 Tim. 1. 6. 2 Pet. 1. 5, 6, 7, 8. 2 Pet. 3. 18. 1 Thess. 3. 12. 1 Thess. 4. 1. By this Exercise I do not onely mean, when we are tempted to any sin, to practice the contrary Virtue, a Subject, whereof I have already discoursed in the *Eleventh Exercise*; but to become eminent in those Virtues, the seeds whereof lie scattered in our Souls; it's not enough now and then to venture upon a single virtuous act, but the virtue must become habitual to us, natural, and easie, and we must learn to harden it into immobility.

My

My *Faith* must not only engage me to Praying, and Hearing, but must advance me into a readiness to die with all Martyrs for the least Article , the Church hath taught me upon the Authority of Gods word ; it must raise my Soul to a transcendent love to the Law of God, to an insatiable hungrily and thirsting after him,to a mighty delight in his presence , to a sacred grief in his absence, and to resolutions to seal the Truth of God with my own Bloud. My *Hope* must not onely make me have a good apprehension of Gods Power and Clemency , but must force me to repose all my Concerns on his holy Providence, make me pray with fervour, and incessantly, and lead me on to trust him in most desperate plunges,make me ashamed, to think, that a Patient, should trust his health with a Physician, the Covetous his Estate with a Lawyer, the Blind his Life with a Child , or Dog, and that I should not trust my self to the Bounty, and Conduct of him, that hath done all things well , that defends all Creatures even to the Snail , and least root of Grass, defends Serpents , and Crows , and showers down Blessings on his Enemies, and therefore cannot possibly be supposed to forsake those, that hope in him.

My

*The Best Exercise.*

My *Patience* must not only extend to such Wrongs, and Injuries, as do not blemish much either my Fortune, or Reputation, but I must so exercise this noble Virtue, that I may learn to bear, and weather far greater blows, even the Censures of good men, and the contradictions of such, as are Persons of Credit, and Interest; This grace must be so cultivated, that I may no longer call Afflictions miseries, but donatives of mercy, gifts that come from my dearest friend, God, that means to conduct me to my happiness, I must get up to a higher form in this School, and learn, that I am a Christian not to be Rich, and Pompous, and take my pleasure in the World (God need not have descended, and shed tears, and bloud, and given Precepts for this) but to bear the Cross, and to become conformable to the Sufferings of *Jesus*. In a word, I must learn to fear nothing so much, as that God will give over afflicting me.

My *Meekness* must not onely teach me to be gentle to great men, but I must so improve it, that it may appear to all that converse with me; and I must learn to be meek, even to those, which I have power over, to those which are under  
my

my Charge, and whom I could by stripes, and threatnings, force into respect, and obedience ; and when Justice and Conscience oblige me to punish, even in that punishment, my mildness must be seen. I must learn to be a Lamb , and to imitate the softness of Wool ; for nothing appeases the angry Elephant , as the meekness of the former , and nothing resists the fury of Cannon-shot , like the softness of the other. I must not give over, till I have brought my self to a temper, whereby my passions may be calm , and quiet, and serene , while those about me, and who chide me , and are angry with me, make a fearful noise, and are transported with indignation.

My *Self-resignation*, may possibly serve me to leave my self to the Will and Direction of God in the enjoyment of moderate Prosperity ; but here I must not rest, but advance this Virtue to a far higher pitch , that come what will , whether Weakness, Feebleness , or Lameness, or Agues, or Feavers, or Consumptions , or Falling-sickness, or the Stone, or the Gout, or Poverty, or Nakednes, or Contempt, or loss of Friends, or loss of Father, Mother, Children, Sisters, Brothers, Relations, Benefactors, Money, Lands, Houses,

R

&amp;c.

*The Best Exercise.*

*&c.* I may conform entirely to the Will of God.

My *Obedience* may lead me to do several things, God hath commanded, but I must drive it farther, and learn to obey God readily, humbly, chearfully, universally, indefatigably, learn to obey him in things that cross my inclination, my temper, my sensual appetite, that are against my profit, my temporal Interest, my honour, and my natural desires, without disputing, evading, or perverting his Commands, and though I apprehend not the reason of his Commands.

My *Modesty* may oblige me to bashfulness in asking, but I must exercise it into greater perfection, till I hate detraction, shun contention, avoid boasting, keep secrets committed to my breast, fly idleness, watch against imprudence, strive against irreverence, and leave all affectedness.

My *Temperance* may make me cautious, and afraid of eating, or drinking more than nature requires; but this is not the only effect it must work in me, but it must teach, and oblige me to go on and avoid curiosity in Diet, Cloaths, and Furniture, and bring me to Self-denial in Sleep, Recreations, Words, Gestures, to ruling

ruling of my Affections, and to purifying of my Thoughts, and Imaginations.

My *Moderation* is not come yet to its full growth, while I do no more, but fear overvaluing sublunary comforts beyond their intrinsick worth, and the end, for which God doth allow them ; but I must make the virtue larger, it must grow in me like the Lillies, and spread its branches, as the Cedars of *Lebanon*. I must learn to keep my delight, and mirth in outward enjoyments, within bounds. I must learn to moderate my grief, when they are taken away ; in a word, weep, as if I wept not, rejoice, as though I rejoiced not, and buy, as though I possessed not, and use the World, as if I used it not. I must learn to be moderate in my contests with my Neighbour, moderate in my censures, moderate in my passions, moderate in my principles, moderate in my judgment, moderate in disputes about Religion.

My *Love to God* is but weak, if I only stand up to vindicate his Word, and holy Oracles, assert their Divinity, and their Truth, but I must blow the fire into flames, learn to embrace mean and painful things for God, to bear incommodities in duties with patience, to be

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*The Best Exercise.*

undiscouraged in successeſs Labourſ, root out Vice, and plant Virtue in all that depend upon me. My love muſt be ſo exerciſed, till God becomes the life of my Soul, the light of mine eyes, and till I can ſay, Lord, here I am, ſend me, give me Grace to do, what thou doſt command, and then command what thou wilt. *I am my beloveds, and my beloved is mine;* Let him kiſs me with the kiſſes of his Lips, for his love is better than Wine. O, my love, my life, my deſire, my delight, my riches, my treasure, my all, my happiness, my hope, my comfort, my beginning, my end, too late have I known thee, too late have I loved thee, O that I had loved thee ſooner!

My *Charity* to my Neighbour, is but in its infancy, while I am onely civil and reſpectful to him without prejudicing my ſelf, but it muſt be exerciſed, and it will grow large and lovely, extend to his Soul, as well as to his body, teach me to be tender of his credit, compassionate to his calamities, helpful in his diſtress, to rejoice at his prosperity, to admoniſh him to holiness, to encourage him to good Works, and to forgive him, even as I hope to be forgiuen in the day of our Lord *Jesus*.

My *Repentance* muſt not only fill me with

with melancholy thoughts about another life ; nor teach me only to suppress the sins , I have been guilty of ; but I must learn to strike at the root of sin ; it must elevate my Soul, and make it fruitful in all good works, and I must learn to hate sin, as much as I loved it before, and to answer my degrees of sin with my degrees of contrition , and my measure of vanity , with my measure of sanctification and righteousness.

My *Redeeming the time* must not only make me spend some hours in private devotion , but I must learn to improve opportunities, whereby my better part may be exalted, not to allow my self in idleness, to do that, which is worth spending my time in, not to spend it in sin or satisfactions of the Flesh , to part with vain thoughts and projects, to rise early, if my strength will permit, to be industrious in my Calling, to season my natural and civil acts, and the Works of my Profession with holy contemplations , to remember, what will stand me in most stead after death, and so to number my days, that I may apply my heart unto Wisdom, even unto that Wisdom , which consists in knowing, and doing the Will of God, in procuring Peace, and Pardon, in mortifi-

cation of our Lusts, and in conformity to  
*Christ's Example.*

Then I exercise all these Graces, when I work them into greater solidity, of feeble make them lusty, and vigorous, and of fickle and uncertain, make them fixed, constant, and immovable, till I come to abound in the work of the Lord *Jesus*, and into this strength and glory they may be wrought by the assistance of Gods Free and Generous Spirit, who is nigh unto them that call upon him, unto all such, as call upon him in truth. I dislike not the practice of some Christians, that do exercise some particular Grace, more than the rest, and render themselves eminent in it, and make it their chief business to be ready, prompt, and accurate in it, as *Gregory the Great*, whose excellency lay in entertaining Strangers; as the pious *Lucius of France*, who took great delight in visiting Hospitals, and serving the sick with his own hands; as *Tobit*, whose Talent lay chiefly in burying the Dead out of Charity; or as that Lady, *Cassian* speaks of, who took into her house a wayward, troublesome, peevish, cholerick, poor Widow, that she might become eminent in patience. Such Exercises I confess are great and noble, and

Psal. 145.  
18.

Tobit. 1.  
17.  
*Cassian*  
col. 1st. 18.  
c. 14.

and befit the holiness of a Christian; but yet one particular Grace must not be exercised to the decay of the rest, or with secret hopes, that God, who sees us laborious in one Virtue, will dispense with our neglect of others. I am sensible it is with Grace as it is with Nature, and some Graces as some Actions are more suitable to our inclinations, than others, not but that we are obliged to love, and embrace all, but some our affections are more violently carried out after, than others, as a Father, though he is kind to all his Children, yet by some secret instinct or Propensity hath a more tender affection to one, than to another, and without all peradventure it is a very laudable and commendable thing, to be industrious in any gracious Work, and Religious Action, but however our inclinations may chiefly run after one particular Grace, the rest also must be duly exercised, and fortified into habit, and a second nature, else we have reason to suspect, that that seemingly holy fruit, is not a Plant of our heavenly Fathers planting, who disperses influences, and assistances sufficient for the growth of every Grace, and improvement of every Virtue in the Soul, and consequently justly expects,

that his Vineyard should bring forth sweet Grapes, not some fower, and some sweet, but all sweet, and all pleasing to a spiritual palate, and appetite.

Of the necessity of this exercise none can doubt, that doth but take pains to read over the several Parables of the Gospel, wherein Grace is compared to Seed, and sure no Gardiner, or Husbandman ever threw Seed into the ground, but took care, that it might grow, and advance into a Blade, next into an Eare, and in the end into ripe Corn : All the Exhortations, all the Admonitions, all the Counsels, in Scripture, to *Stedfastness, and Abounding, and Increasing, and going on to Perfection,* do with one Mouth, and with one Voice, proclaim the necessity of this Exercise. And, O *Christians!* if you would know, what it is to recover the great loss you had in *Adam*, this Exercise will be your Schoolmaster, this will, in some measure, bring you up to that Innocence, and Perfecti-  
on he enjoy'd in Paradise ; This will re-entitle you to that Image of God, in which he was at first created ; This will make the Divine Character which Sin hath blotted, legible again ; This will make the Divine Nature flourish in you again ;

again ; Make your Faces shine like that of *Moses*, when he descended from the Mount : This will set a Beauty on your Souls, fit for God to be enamor'd withal ; By this you will be able to gues at the Glory of the first Creation, and what wonderful Creatures your first Father and Mother were, before the fatal Tree became a snare to their Appetite : This will make you fit company for your Head *Christ Jesus*, who therefore gave *some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Pastors, and Teachers, even for the perfecting of the Saints, for the edifying of the Body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect Man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ* ; for indeed, this is growing up unto him in all things, from whom the wbole body joyn'd together, and compacted by that, which every joynt supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase in the Body, unto the edifying it self in love, Ephes. 4. 11, 12, 13,

15.

**XV Exercise.**

*Every Night before we go to Bed, to call our selves to an account for the Actions of the Day, and Examine our Hearts, and Lives, how we have discharged our Duty towards God, and toward Man; An Exercise commanded Psal. 4. 4. 2 Cor. 13.*

*vers. sat. 4.  
ut nemo in  
se si tentat  
descendere  
nemo? sed  
precedenti  
spectatur  
mantica  
ergo.*

5. *Jerem. 8. 6.* This Exercise is the life of all the rest; and the great reason, why Men make no greater progress in Goodness, is because, they do not study and search their own Lives, and Actions. How should we know, what good we ought to do, except we examine, what evil we commit. The Merchant at night casts up the gains of the day, and if he finds, he hath lost more, than he hath gained, seeks to recover it with the first opportunity. It's a wonderful thing, we should examine our Servants about trifles, and inconsiderable matters, and leave our selves, about whom Heaven and Earth are concerned, unexamined. A Man trys the Oxen he hath bought, whether they be strong to labour, or no, and his Horses, whether they will do him service, or no, and sees, whether he hath all his Sheep, and whether none of his Cattle be lost; and shall we be such

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enemies to our own Souls, as not to see, what condition they are in?

No man can be a good man, that neglects this Exercise, for every good Man must be cautious of offending God; But how can any man be cautious of offending him, that doth not search and see, what it is, that doth offend him, and whether his own actions be not the things, that do displease him. Nothing will make a man more cautious, than this frequent calling himself to an account; and since every rational person, that chuses the end, must necessarily chuse the means also, that lead to that end, it will unavoidably follow, that he that is a good man, and cautious of offending God, cannot but resolve upon this Self-examination, the great means to arrive to that cautiousness. This was

*David's practice*, and long before him, <sup>Psal. 119.</sup> *Isaac*, who went every Night into the <sup>54.</sup> *Psal. 63. 6.*

Field to Meditate, as we read, *Gen. 24.*

63. no doubt, in that Meditation, he reflected on the Actions of the Day, that he might Praise God for the particular Assurances, and Influences, he had felt, and for the future watch against the Errors, and Defects, he had been guilty of that day.

Men,

## The Best Exercise.

Anton. lib.  
 10. Sect.  
 37.  
~~Σιωπὴν τὸν οὐκέτι  
ταῦται.~~  
 Laert. lib.  
 8. in Py-  
 thag. &  
 lib. I.  
 in Cleob.  
 & Cicar.  
 lib. de se-  
 nct. Cal.  
 Rhodig.  
 lib. II.  
 cleob. antiq.  
 l. 1. Sc.  
 nec. de Ira.  
 l. 3. c. 36.  
 Animus  
 quotidiæ ad  
 rationem  
 reddendam  
 vocandus  
 est, &c.  
 Heraclitus  
 interroga-  
 tus quid  
 saceret, re-  
 spondit.  
 P. Senequa  
 Plutarch.  
 adv. Colot.  
 Julian.  
 de Cynismo  
 Orat. I.

Men, to whom the Word of God ne-  
 ver came, have seen the necessity of this  
 Exercise, and thought, they could not  
 be Men without it ; and, O my Friends !  
 Can we be Christians without it ? It was  
 one of the Canons of the *Pythagorean*  
 Discipline, to call to mind what they  
 had been doing in the Day, and some-  
 times they reflected on what they had  
 done two or three days before. This  
 was the Doctrine, and Practice of *Cleo-  
 bulus*, and of the *Indian Gymnosopists*,  
 who strictly enquired, what good they  
 had done in the day-time : And, How  
 like a Christian doth the Noble *Seneca*  
 speak, when he tells his Friend *Novatus*,  
*The heart must every day be call'd to an ac-  
 count.* So did the brave *Sextius*, before  
 he composed himself to sleep, when day-light  
 was shut in, he ask'd his heart, *What Disease,*  
*what Distemper of Nature hast thou Cured ?*  
*What sin hast thou withstood ? Wherein art*  
*thou better ? Wrath and Anger will decay,*  
*and cool, if thus it be called to the Barr eve-*  
*ry day ; What can be more pleasant, than*  
*thus to explore the Actions of the whole*  
*day ? How soft must that rest be, that succeeds*  
*this Examination ! How sweet, how free,*  
*how easie must it be, when the Soul is either*  
*Commended, or Admonish'd, and a Man*  
*is*

is his own Judge, and turns Critick upon his own Life ? This Power I use, and every day I have Pleadings in my Soul, when the Candles are taken away, and my Wife, knowing my Custom, hath left me to my self. I dive into the whole Day, and measure my Words and Actions over again ; I hide nothing from my self, I pass by nothing that I have said or done, for why should I be afraid of mine own Errours, when I can say to my heart, Take heed, do so no more, I forgive thee at this time. Thus spake the best Tutor of the worst of Princes ; and though a Heathen, yet I do not see, how a Christian could have deliver'd himself better.

It hath been the serious study of Holy Men, what Rules they might prescribe to young beginners in Religion , to subdue their Sins : Some, as St. Anthony, have advised, to write down the sins of the day past every night, and so to look them over. Others (as Zenon) have directed Men to take a Coal of Fire now and then, and hold it to their Fingers , till they feel the pain , and from thence to conclude, what the Tortures of Hell will be. The Jews talk like Mad Men, Rabbi Eli, ever Ben Jacob in Minchah: when they prate of their Phylacteries, as Amulets against sin, and Preservatives of

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Vertue. Nothing certainly will do it better, than this daily Self-examination, for this will bring me to a right knowledge of my sins, set them in order before me, and charge me home, as *Nathan* did the straying *David*, *Thou art the Man.* *This word was rash, That thought evil, This action was contrary to the will of God, That was inconvenient, This favoured of baseness of Spirit, and that of Pride; This Expression was Malicious, and that Gesture proceeded from Ill Will, and Envy, &c.* Not a few Men are lost, because they will not know, that many of their Actions, or Words, are sinful, such especially, as fit them for converse with vain People, and render them acceptable to careless, sensual company; They are content with a General Confession of their Sins, and flatter themselves, that they have done well enough, when they have Confessed that they are Miserable Sinners. In their Devotions they love to dwell on Generals, and shun coming to particular Offences, as a Malefactor doth Self-accusation. Communing with their own Hearts, would unvail to them the particular Errors of their Lives, and would bring them to such a Knowledge of themselves, as would at once Instruct,

struct, and Terrifie them ; and were they once acquainted with their particular Miscarriages, they durst not sin against Knowledge, at least very few would dare to be so bold.

And, as this daily Examination would discover to us our particular Offences, so at the same time it would shew us the multiplicity of those particulars, and the multiplicity would fright us from the Commission, and oblige us to take another course. The multiplicity of our sins would appear so unworthy, so monstrous, so full of Ingratitude, that we should be ashamed to own our dependance upon the Almighty, and yet heap Injury upon Injury, and Offence upon Offence : This would make the Body of Sin look much bigger, than ordinarily it doth, and the vastness of the heap would be a discouragement from Sin, as a Load, which the Porter cannot lift, frights him from the attempt of carrying it.

This Communing with our own Hearts would awaken our Consciences, and they being once awake, would tease, and haunt, and follow us, and not leave us till we resolve to part with the dearest sins, we have ; There is a mighty difference

ference between a Conscience, that is a sleep or oppressed with cares, and pleasures of the World, and a Conscience, that's broad awake. The Conscience that's husht into a slumber, lets the Sinner do any thing, he hath a mind to, so much at least, as is consistent with his Honour and Reputation of the World, it will let him lye, swear, forswear, deceive, dissemble, be angry, &c. without contradicting him; it will let him go to bed quietly, eat and drink, and go into company without molestation, and though he fancies all the while, that his Conscience is at peace with him, yet most certainly, it's nothing but stupidity, and carnal security, which will end at last in fearful thundring, and lightning; but a Conscience, that's awake, will disturb a man in every place, he comes at; check him, if he doth but look awry, represent to him the mercies, and terrors of the Lord, bid him remember, he hath a Soul to be saved, assure him, that as light as such a sin may seem in other mens apprehensions, it cannot but grieve a Holy God, fright him with flashes of Hell-fire, shew him *Topher* afar off, expostulate with him, how he can so much forget himself, as to displease the most lovely, and most amiable

able being. This Conscience will do, when it hath shook off the chains of slumber, and if this be its nature, and self-examination rouzes it, it must needs follow, that this Communing with our own Heart, must be the best preservative against the infection of any sin whatsoever.

The use of this Exercise appears to me so necessary, that I cannot forbear enlarging upon't, and giving you what Directions I can, for the faithful performance of it, and they are these following:

*I. Let it not be done slightly, or superficially*, as careless Servants sweep a Room, leaving half of the rubbish behind them. Some Christians there are, who being loath to be miserable hereafter, and sensible, that Christ must be obey'd in every thing, will force themselves to do any thing, they hear, is their Duty; but they do not properly perform the Duty, but onely something like it, that their Hearts may not smite them for the total omission. They do it so slovenly, and so overly, that they had as good have left it undone. The shadow of a duty is one thing, and the substantial part of it is another, and he

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that is expert in drawing the former, is not therefore not necessarily skill'd in the latter. He that calls himself to an account for the Sins he hath committed, and not for the neglects he hath been guilty of, doth the work by halves; or he that spends onely a few transient thoughts upon his Actions, and presently interrupts the Task again with some impertinent busines; or takes a careless survey of his Behaviour and Deportment, and mingles thoughts of the World, or of sensual Pleasure, with those Contemplations of himself, shews he hath no stomach, no desire, no appetite to this Spiritual Food, that the World doth yet engross his desires, and affections, and that he thinks Heaven scarce worth taking by violence.

2. *When you go about it, go about it willingly, and chearfully, not like men, that seem angry with God, for laying such a yoke upon the neck of his Disciples.* I do not deny, but that the Devil and our own Lusts will make Objections against it, plead, that it is not necessary, or that hereby our worldly Profit will be much obstructed, and that we do not read of many Saints, that have used it, and that it is a thing not common, and that we must mind

mind the Works of our Calling, and that sleep will oppress us, if we go about this Work at night, &c. The Devil did never yet let any man go quietly to Heaven ; and therefore such impediments he'll certainly throw in any mans way, that hath serious resolutions not to neglect it ; but these objections must be courageously answered , vigorously resisted, and manfully opposed , for the strong man will not leave the house, except you throw him out by force. He that is afraid of discomposing his soft Lusts, and Passions, to be sure can do no good here ; and whatever unwillingness may creep, or steal upon us in this Exercise, our business must be to strive, and pray, and labour hard against it , and to resolve to cross it,whatever it costs us ; Suggestions, that would make us unwilling to venture, must not be dangled, courted, or flatter'd. No, but must be beaten off with a strong hand, and we must not give over till the Exercise becomes delightful to us ; for as it is in the Works of Charity, so in this, God ever loves a cheerful Giver. To go about this Work as the Oxe goes to the Shambles , to be forced, and dragg'd to it, as an untowardly School-boy to his Book , to scratch our

Heads, when we are to apply our selves to it , and to be drawn to it by fears of Hell , and terrors within , is with the Jews, Mal. 2. 13. *To cover the Altar of the Lord with tears and weeping, and crying out, insomuch, that he regards not our offering anymore, or receives it with a good will at our hands.*

3. *Let it be done with an intent to be better.* Whatever we do in Religion, this must be our end. He that examines himself at night in course, or makes a formality of it, and hath no real intent to leave , and watch against the Sins and neglects , which upon examination he finds in himself, or to become more serious, beats the Air, and what is worse , mocks the Almighty, and takes his Covenant in his Mouth, while he hates to be reformed, as it is said, *Psal. 56. 16, 17.* One would think, no man should undertake this Task, but with an intent to become more cautious of sinning, and more watchful against temptations ; yet such is the deceitfulness of our Hearts , that we are apt to fancy, God likes the Duty, and regards not the Effect, as the Harlot, *Prov. 7. 14. This day have I paid my Vows, therefore came I forth to meet thee.* She made her Vows, and Prayers, not

not the means , but the end ; Means they are indeed , whereby God would makes us holier ; but he that rests in the means , and goes no further , is like unto a man , that works in a Garden , or Vineyard , and rids no ground ; Labour is the means whereby the Garden is to be manured , and cultivated , that it may bring forth Flowers , Herbs , and Plants , and all manner of pleasant Fruits ; He that doth not make this fruitfulness the end of his Labour , takes pains , but does do nothing .

4. *Let it be done with some aggravation of the defects , and errors of your lives ;* which you detect by examination . The bare discovery of our neglects , or defects , will signifie little , except they be represented to our minds in such black Characters , as shall work us into detestation . Being drawn at large , and the offences heightned from circumstances , and the defects considered , together with the light , and knowledge we have , with the encouragements , motives , arguments , God is pleased to give us , with the various opportunities we enjoy , with the parts , gifts , abilities , the Almighty hath bestow'd upon us ; they will look more big and dreadful , and consequently the

sight will make deeper impressions upon us, and engage us to greater care and circumspection. On the other side, where the influences, assistances, helps, and strength, and power, against any sin, or temptation, or any other mercy we have received in the day-time, be heightened and made more lively, by considering our vileness, unworthiness, wretchedness, and how undeserved these Blessings are, how they favour of bowels of compassion of Gods Paternal care, and discover Gods unspeakable love to his poor Creatures, and his immense liberality to Wretches, that have deserved his anger and fury, and indignation; the Heart will be more taken with them, and engaged to a more fervent love to God, and to greater alacrity to run in the way of his Commandments.

5. *Those that have Families, let them by all means exhort their Children, and Servants to this Exercise. Those I mean which are capable of it.* And they are capable of it sooner, than we are aware, especially if we do entice them to it by Rewards, and Promises, till custom hath made it pleasant, and then they will desire our approbation, more than our recompence. This is certainly part of that walking with-

within our houses with a perfect heart, which *David* makes the necessary qualification of a good House-keeper, *Psal. 101.*

2. Goodness is ever communicative, and no man loves God truly, that doth not desire others should love him, as well as himself. It is the nature of true Devotion, to be active, and zealous to make Proselytes, and indeed where the heart is enamour'd with Gods Beauty, and Excellency, it is impatient, till it brings others into a relish, and liking of it. If this Communing with our own hearts be profitable to our own Souls, why should it not be so to the Souls of persons committed to our trust? If we think it necessary to our Salvation, shall we think, those under our Charge may find out another way to Heaven? If we look upon it as a sure Preservative, to guard us against Sin, shall we leave those, whose Souls, as well as Bodies, we are to provide for, to secure themselves against Sin, as well as they can? These are absurdities, which a Christian must not be guilty of, except such Christians, as the Angel of the Church of *Sardis* was, who *had a name, that he lived, but was dead,* Rev. 3. 1.

6. *Take such a method in this daily Self-examination, as is most easie and natural.* Either proceed directly to contemplation of your outward, and inward man, or lay the Decalogue before you, or make Christ's Sermon upon the Mount the Rule of this Exploration. I will touch upon each of these Methods, and leave it to your discretion, to take, which you please. Indeed we should not need to descend to such particulars, had we to deal with men that were in love with Religion, and would apply general things to themselves, think themselves concern'd in every Lesson, that's deliver'd in publick; and when they hear Sinners reprov'd and condemn'd, cry with the Disciples of our Lord, *Master, is it I?* But our Business for the most part being with men, who like wanton Children will scarce eat the Meat, that's cut for them, and are so choak'd with the Cares and Riches, and Enjoyments of this World, that the loudest Thunders of God make no impression on them, and fancy, because they are not particularly named in the Bible, that therefore the Commands there given, do not belong to them, we are forced to make the way, they are to walk in, as easie as we can;

remove

remove the Stones out of it, and tell them every step of the way, in hopes, that all these pains may work upon their good Nature, and oblige them to break loose from the Kingdom of Sin and Darkness. And therefore,

1. If the Actions and Motions of our outward, and inward man be made the Rule of this daily Self-examination , the particular questions, that must be proposed to our Hearts, at night, must be such as these : To begin with the Senses ;

As for the *Ear* ; Have not I this day heard some ill, immodest, unsavoury Expressions used by others, and hath it been a grief to me, hath it been a trouble to my Soul, to think that my God was abused and dishonoured by it ? Have not my Ears been open to corrupt , and vain communications? Have not I been tickled with some obscene . or filthy Story , I have heard ? Have I heard my Neighbour reviled, or ill spoken of , and have I done the duty of a Friend, and justified his innocent Behaviour ? Have I heard this day of any undecent deportment of any of my Family, and have I reproved them for it, or admonish'd them to amendment of life ? Have not I been  
plea.

pleased with the Commendations I have heard men pass upon me, and hath not their applause tempted me to vain-glory ? Have I heard of losses I have had, with Patience ? Have I heard a man speak disgracefully of me, without being enraged at the Calumny ? Have I heard men entice me to sin, and have I abhorred the invitation ? Have I heard men, Swear and Curse, and have I been concern'd at the greatness of their Sin ?

On the Lords Day especially ; Have I heard the Word this day with seriousness ? Did I come to hear with Resolutions to practice, what I heard ? Was my Heart affected with the happy message of Grace and Pardon ? Was not I more taken with the Ministers delivery, than the great things he spoke of ? Was it custom that obliged me to go and hear, or was it a fervent desire to be edified, and built up in my most holy Faith ? Do I feel in my self any Purposes at this present to do as I have been advised to day ? Did I prepare my self for hearing the Word by suitable Thoughts, and Contemplations of that awful Majesty, before whom I was to appear ? Did I feel any heat in my Hearing, which was ready to consume the Straw, and Stubble of my carnal

Affe-

Affections? Did I find any sweetness in the Word of God, I heard to day? Was my Heart ravish'd when I heard the joyful news of Christ's Redemption to day? Was my Soul affected with the love of God, when I heard it described to day at the Receiving of the Holy Sacrament? Have I done my duty at home? Have I made my Servants and Children hear, what the Lord their God requires at their hands?

As for the Eye; Have I this day lifted up mine Eyes to Heaven, and taken notice of Gods Providences? Have not I fed mine Eyes with some unlawful Spectacle? Have not I seen men sin, and laugh'd at it? Have not I beheld immodest Actions, and been delighted with them? Hath not the sight of such a Vanity, transported me into admiration of it? Have I read a Portion of the Holy Scriptures to day, and remembred to apply the things, I read of, to mine own Conscience? Have I been enflamed with the Goodness of the men I have read of? Have the Duties and Precepts I have read caused in me a willingness to perform them? Have I beheld the Finger of God in the Blessings, I have received to day? Have I taken notice of Gods Goodnes to me,

me, and mine, and stood amazed at it ? Have I look'd upon the Works of God to day, upon Trees, and Herbs, and Flowers, and admired the Wisdom, Glory, and Bounty of God ?

As for the *Tongue*, and *Lips* ; Have I wilfully spoke evil of no man to day ? Have not I rendred Railing for Railing, and Threatning for Threatning ? Have I been careful to drop something of God in the company, I have been in ? Did not I Eat and Drink to day , more to please my Appetite,than to repair the decay'd strength of my nature,that I might be more serviceable to God , and my Neighbour ? Did I take occasion to speak of something, that's good at my Table ? And when I craved a Blessing, was not my mind more intent upon the Meat before me than on the Great God above me ? Have not I been intemperate to day ? Did not I Eat, and Drink more than Nature required ? Have I Pray'd with my Family to day, and did that Prayer proceed from an humble sence of our Spiritual Wants, and Necessities ? Have not I said something, whereby my Neighbour might suffer in his Credit, and Reputation ? Have I dropt never a Lye in my Shop, or Trade, or in company,

pany, either in Jest, or for some Advantage, or to please Men? Have not I rashly made, or falsely broke a Promise? Have I in my Addresses and Answers, shew'd all Meekness unto all Men? Have not I talk'd Surly, or Proudly to a Man because he was Poor? Have not I disdain'd to speak to him, because he went in Rags? Have I avoided Foolish Talk, and when I have been tempted to break a Jest, which was either Smuttry, or might be some way prejudicial to my Neighbour, have I suppressed it, and been more ambitious of being Grave, and Modest, than of the Reputation of being Witty?

*As for the Hands and Feet*, whereby the Scripture usually expresses Mans actions; Have I been diligent in the Duties of my Calling to day? Have I defrauded no Man, deceived no Man? Have I dealt uprightly and Honestly with all Men? Have I shunn'd that company, which I was afraid would draw me into Sin? Have not I complyed with some sinful Action of the Company, I have been in? Have I some way or other shewn my abhorrency and detestation of their Sins? Have I really endeavour'd more to please God than Men? What good

good have I done to day ? Have not I taken more pains, and care to dress my Body, than I have done to beautifie my Soul ? Have not I been more curious about my Cloaths, than about my Graces ? Have not I been more careful to make my Face pleasing to Spectators, than I have been to approve my self to God ? Have not I lost somewhat of the Life of Religion, by going into such Society ? Have not I spent my time in idleness ? Have I taken care to spend it for Eternity ?

*As for the Mind* ; Have I endeavour'd to dispossess my Mind of Evil thoughts to day ? Have I called in Pious and Spiritual Reflections ? Have I resisted Wandering thoughts in Prayer ? Have not I suffered worldly thoughts to eat out the virtue of my Prayers ? Have I in my supplications represented to my Mind, Gods Greatness, Goodness, Majesty, and Holiness ? And was I sensible of my Spiritual Wants, and Necessities all the time ? Have I been much in Holy Ejaculations to day ? Was God first and last in my thoughts, when I waked this morning, and went to rest last night ?

*As for the Conscience* ; Have I made Conscience of the least Sins to day ? Have

I conscientiously discharged the Duties of my severall Relations ? Have I done, as a person , in such a Relation would, and should have done ? Have I made Conscience of doing a thing, which I have either known, or feared to be a Sin ? Have not I made light of Sin ? Have not I laughed at those Sins, I should have mourned at ? Have I been concern'd at other Mens Sins, as well as at mine own ?

*As for the Passions and Affections ;* Have not I given way to the Workings of Pride, and Anger to day ? Have not I been angry with my Neighbour without a Causle ? Have not I in a Passion given men ill Language ? Have not I said that in my Wrath, which now I wish I had not ? Have not I been fiery and hot upon very slight and trivial occasions ? Have not I mistrusted Gods Providence ? Have not I been more careful about making provision for the Flesh , than about enriching of my Soul ? Have not I found greater joy in temporal, than in spiritual Blessings ? Hath not such a Vanity, such a Present, such a Gift affected, and ravished me more , than the news of Gods Grace, and Pardon, and the influences of the Holy Ghost ? Have I watcht against Wrath and Envy, and Malice, and immo-

immoderate Grief, and carnal Mirth? Have I got ground of such a corruption? Have I been better to day, than yesterday? Have I serv'd God without distraction, more to day, than I have done formerly?

Such questions as these you may put to your Hearts, if you mean to take your outward and inward man into considera-  
tion. But then,

2. If you had rather make the *Ten Com-  
mandments* your Rule, the Account may  
be taken in this manner. As to the *First  
Commandment*; have not I this day con-  
fided in the Creature more, than in the  
Creator? Have not I been wilfully ig-  
norant of some Truth, that hath been  
brought to my Ears? Have not I despis-  
ed God, by rejecting some motions of  
his Holy Spirit? Have not I lived to day  
like a Man, that doth not believe the  
Promises, and threatenings of God? Have  
not I doubted of some Truth revealed  
in the Word of God, or lived as if I  
had doubted of his Providence? Hath  
my Faith been lively this day? Did not  
I sink into carnal Security? Have I ex-  
ercised my Hope in God? Have I ex-  
pressed my Love to God to day? Have  
not I loved some outward thing, more  
than God? Hath not my love to God  
been

been in words onely ? Hath it discover'd it self in actions ? Have I desired to be at peace with God, and to be united unto him more ? Have I done nothing, that hathavour'd of hatred or contempt of God ?

As to the *Second Commandment* ; Have I feared God to day , and have I feared him more, than all the men, I have had to do with ? Have I been very cautious of offending him ? Have I abhorred the motion , when I have been tempted to any Evil ? Have I obeyed God in sincerity ? Hath there been any known Sin, that I have not shunn'd, or hath there been any known Duty , which I was not more forward to perform, than to omit ? Have not I exalted my self, or thought my self better than my Neighbours ? Have I given God all the Glory , and have I spoke very modestly of my self ? Have not I been peevish and impatient, under such a Providence, that hath crossed my Designs ? Have not I indulged my self in Hypocrisie ? Have I been more desirous to be, than to seem good ? Have I given God that Worship to day, which is due to him ? Have I pray'd to him in Truth, and praised him with joyful Lips ?

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*The Best Exercise.*

As to the *Third Commandment*; Have not I this day neglected an opportunity of giving good Counsel, and Advice to men, related to me? Have not I shunn'd discourses of God, and Holiness? Have I admired, and adored Gods holy Attributes? Have not I broke forth into rash Oaths? Have not I been ashamed of standing up for the Glory of Gods Name? Have I trembled to see God abused? Have I shew'd Courage and Resolution when I have seen, or heard my God dis-honour'd? Have not I scandalized some Persons by my Actions? Have not I abu-sed my Christian Liberty? Have I ma-gnified Gods Mercies, and dared to own God in the Blessings I have received? Have not I extenuated, or denied Gods Mercies? Have not I neglected the Gifts of God, that are in me? Have not I by my lukewarmness betray'd Christ's Cause? Have not I neglected my Duty of Prayer, upon the account of some Worldly Interest? Have not I begg'd of God things, contrary to the Will of God?

As to the *Fourth Commandment*; which doth in a special manner, respect the Lords Day: Have I gone this day with joy into the House of God? Have I heard

heard the Word, and treasured it up in my Heart? Have not I aimed more at the information of my Judgment, than at warming my Affections? Was it Curiosity, or Piety, that led me to the Temple? Have I gathered my thoughts together in the publick Prayers of the Church, and hath my Heart and Desires gone along with the Supplications, the Minister of God put up to Heaven? Have not I thought of my Trade, and Farms, and Oxen: while I have been repeating the words after Gods Minister? Have I meditated, and bid my thoughts fly up to Heaven to take a view of my Eternal rest? Have I Read in private? Have I call'd my Family together, read to them, instructed them, made them give me an account of what they remember? Have not I preferred my worldly profit to day before my Duty? Have not I stayed away from the publick Worship of God for worldly Gain? When I received the holy Sacrament to day, were my thoughts fixed on the Cross of Christ? Was my Soul affected with the Mystery of Gods Love? Did my Sins grieve me, when I beheld Christ Crucified? Did the sight of Christs Crucifixion fill me with indignation against my Sins? Did it fill me

with serious deliberate Resolutions to watch against them? Did it fill me with Praises and Adorations of the stupendious Humiliation of the Son of God? Did it make me resolve to imitate him in his Holiness? Have I according to the Apostles Command, laid in store, as God hath prospered me the foregoing week? Have I laid aside somewhat of my Gain for Pious uses, to give to them, that need? Do I respect Gods Ministers? Do I love them? Do I communicate to them, that teach in all good things? Do I forbear with their infirmities? Do I obey them in things that tend to my Salvation? Do I give them that which is due to them? Am I kind as well as just to them, especially to those, who faithfully labour in Gods Vineyard.

As to the *Fifth Commandment*; Have I acted this day as a Father, as a Mother, as a Master, as a Mistress, as a Magistrate, as a Tutor, as a Son, as a Daughter, as a Servant, as a Subject, as a Pupil, as an old Man, as a young Man, as a Husband, as a Wife, as a Minister, as a Hearer, as a Maid, as a Widdow, as a rich Man, as a poor Man, ought to act, and as they are commanded by the Holy Ghost to act in their several Stations? Have I been thankful for Kindnesses shew'd me? Have I kept  
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my due distance to my Superiors? Have I been officious to my Equals, kind to my Inferiors? Have I studied gravity in Words, Actions, Gestures, and Postures, and Behaviour? Have not I spoke Evil of Dignities? Have not I been a Respecter of Persons? Have not I connived at Sins in my Children, or Friends, which I have reprov'd in a Servant, or one in a low Condition? Have not I been negligent in providing for my Family? Have not I spent the time in idleness which should have been spent in working in my Calling?

As for the *Sixth Commandment*; Have I been just in all my Dealings this day? Have I hurt no body in Word, or Deed? Have I moderated mine Anger? Have I been easily reconciled to persons, that did offend me? Have not I studied Revenge? Have I look'd up to Heaven, when I have been reproach'd, and minded the Supreme Cause, that suffer'd this reproach to fall on me for my Sins, more than the Instrument, or Person that abused me? Have I been willing to decede from mine own right, for peace, and quietness sake? Have not I been Cruel, Harsh, Morose, Ill-natur'd to Men? Have not I begun a Quarrel, or encourag'd it,

when it was begun? Have I been sorry and troubled for any injury, that hath been offer'd to my Neighbour? Have I been compassionate, tender-hearted? Have I discharged the Duty of a Friend to those, whom I have made believe, that I was their Friend? Have not I pretended Friendship, when I had no love for them? Have not I dissembled with men, flatter'd them, given them fair words, when in my heart I hated, or despised, or under-valued them?

As for the *Seventh Commandment*; Have I maintained Chastity this day? Have I watched over my Thoughts, Inclinations, and Desires? Have I abhorred all obscene, filthy, and impure Communications, and Actions? Have I been very moderate in my Eating, Drinking, Recreation, Cloathing, and Desires after these outward Comforts? Have I dash'd all evil Concupiscence in my Soul in its Birth, and when first I felt it stirring? Have I been troubled, when I have heard of the Adulteries, Fornications, and Lasciviousness of other men? If I met with any immodest, or undecent Sight, did I turn away mine Eyes, and impregnate my Mind with Arguments, and Reasons against any sinful complacency?

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As for the *Eight Commandment*; Have I come justly by those things, I have gain'd this day? Do I possess nothing, that hath been got by Deceit, or Oppression? Have I been faithful to my Trust? Have not I suffer'd my Neighbour to be wronged, when I might have prevented it? Have not I been guilty of Covetousness? Or have not I been guilty of another Extreme, which is Prodigality? Have not I thought much of giving something to the Poor, while I have spared no cost to adorn my Back, and feed my Belly, considering the plenty God hath given me? Have I been Hospitable and glad to feed some Stranger or poor House-keeper at my Table? Have I not spent Money upon my Sin and Pride, or Wantonness? Have not I consented to another Mans Injustice? If I have wronged, or deceived my Neighbour, am I willing and ready to make restitution?

As for the *Ninth Commandment*; Have I spoke nothing but Truth to day? Have I kept my word to day? Have I perform'd what I promised either to God or Man? Have not I by Equivocations, Palliations of Sins, and Mental Reservations sought to put a Cheat upon my Neighbour? Have not I been voluntari-

ly ignorant of such Deceptions ? Have not I reported things for certain , which at the best have been but doubtful ? Have not I been peremptory in accusing my Neighbour of an Errour, when nothing but a conjecture, or surmise rais'd the Accusation ? Have I been candid, and open-hearted in my Dealings ? Have not I betray'd the Secret of my Friend ? Have not I been wavering in asserting the Truth ? Have not I been very forward to censure others ? Have I been silent , when I have had no certain knowledge of things, and have I been willing to be better inform'd by others ? Have I patiently heard, what men could say for themselves ? And have not I given Judgment before I have heard the Cause ?

As for the *Tenth Commandment*; Have I been contented this day with that condition God hath allotted me in this World ? Have not I grumbled , and repined , that God hath not provided so well for me, as he hath done for others ? Have not I been wishing , that I were in such a Rich mans Case, or that I had such an Estate , as my Neighbour hath ; or that I had such a House , such Means, such Accommodations, as he is Master of ; that I had as little to do, and had as plentiful

tiful a Table, and as prosperous a Life, as he is blessed withal? Have my Desires kept within their bounds, and have not I been ready to determine, what State, and Condition, is fittest for me? And have not I thought my self wiser than God, in fancying I might have done better in another State of Life, than that he thought fit to place me in?

3. In the same manner *Christ's Sermon upon the Mount* may be laid before us, and our Hearts called to an account by such Queries as these: Have I this day exercised any Poverty of Spirit? Have I entertain'd low and humble Conceits of my self? Hath my Heart been very indifferent as to these outward Conveniences, and unconcerned whether I have much of this Worlds Goods or no? Have my sins been a grief or trouble to my Soul? Have they made me take on and mourn, because I have offended, a tender Father, a gracious God, a merciful Redeemer? Have I studied Meekness, and Gentleness in my Answers, and Actions? Have I felt a mighty hunger, and thirst after Righteousness in my Soul? Have I had an opportunity to shew my self Merciful; and have I embraced the opportunity? Have I look'd to my inward man, and

and endeavour'd to purifie my Thoughts, Desires, and Inclinations? Hath my heart gone along with my Prayer? Have I studied sincerity in Devotion, sincerity in my Dealings, and sincerity in all my Speeches? Have I carried my self peaceably; Have I given no just occasion to my Neighbour to quarrel with me? Have I, to the best of my skill, and power, promoted peace among dissenting Brethren, if I have met with any such? Have I exhorted them to love, to kindness, to mutual forbearing one another? If I have heard any person speak evil of me, because of my Conscientiousness, have I rejoiced at it? Have I by my good example, endeavour'd to keep my Neighbours from sinning? Have I been ready to give good Counsel to people, if they have desired it, and God put an opportunity into my hand? Have I made the lesser Commandments my Rule, as well, as the greater? Have I been afraid of calling my Neighbour Fool? Have I been cautious of giving Men any Nicknames? Have I been easily reconciled, if Men have been sorry for their Fault? Have not I cherish'd any unlawful Lust or Desire after Man, or Woman? Have I shunn'd the occasions of such sins, as I am

am very prone to ? Have I contented my self in my common discourses with bare Assertions, without vehement Asseverations ? Have I cross'd Flesh and Blood, when I have found an unwillingness upon my Spirit to do a Duty , and done more; than God's Spirit did at first prompt me to? And if any of my Neighbours hath desired me to do him a kindness, and I have been loath to do it, have I to cross that unwillingness , done him a double kindness? How have I behaved my self to them, whom I have lookt up-on as mine Enemies ? Have I pray'd for them ? Have I forbore to speak ill of them ? Have not I remembred the Injury, and withdrawn my self from doing that good to them, which I might have done, and they desired me to do? Have I done more than others ? God hath blessed me with greater Mercies, than he hath done some of my Neighbours , have I endeavour'd to go beyond them in Goodness, as I do excel them in outward advantages? Have I given some Alms to day ? And have not I boasted of my Charity to others ? Have I been contented with Gods knowing of it ? Have not I been desirous others should know, what I do as to that Point ? Have I pray'd.

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and when my door was lockt, and any person knockt; while I was at Prayer, have not I broke off my Prayer, and open'd the door, and been more concern'd for Men, and the World, than Gods Glory? When I have fasted at any time, hath not my Fast, been a Mock-fast, and have not I upon the Credit of such a Fast, allowed my self greater liberty in finning, and minding vanity? Have I acted like a person, that believes I am of greater Worthli, than many Sparrows, and if God provide for them, that he will provide much more for me? Have I entirely relied upon God in the use of lawful means? Have not I tormented my self with Cares, and Carkings, about a Livelihood? Have I taken notice how God takes care of Beasts, and Fowls of the Air; and from thence taken occasion to strengthen my Faith? Have I made it my first and chiefest Businels to secure Gods Kingdom, and its Righteousness? Have not I rashly judged, and condemn'd my Neighbour to day? Have not I spent my time in tittle-tattle, and of what this, and of what the other Man or Woman doth? Have I minded mine own Errors more than my Neighbours? Have I been more sollicitous to reform my self than

than others ? Have I ask'd, and begg'd, of God Spiritual Blessings with greater earnestness, and opportunity, than Temporal ? Have I done by my Neighbour, as I would be done by ? Have I walk'd very strictly, and circumspectly ? Have I been very Conscientious in my ways, and been afraid of the very appearance of Evil ? Have I given demonstration of the sincerity of my Faith by my Works, and hath my outward Conversation been iuitable to my Profession ? Have I been a practical Christian, and hath the Will of God been the Rule of my Life, and Conversation ?

And these are the Methods I thought fit to offer to your choice in this daily Self-examination , or Communing with your own Hearts ; Which Method soever you chuse, I doubt not, but by the Blessing of him, who sees your Works , it will have the same effect upon you , it had upon *David* , whom it obliged to *turn his feet unto Gods Testimonies*. Me-<sup>Psal. 119.</sup> thods are various, and differ according <sup>59.</sup> to our several apprehensions of things, and one may be easier and more agreeable to us than another ; But whatever Method we use, it matters not much, so the chief things are but examined , which

which ought principally to be reflected on.

A mighty fence of the necessity of this Exercise, will soon dictate Methods to a Soul, that is sollicitous concerning it: Where different ways lead to a Town, though one may be a nearer, another more about, yet if the several Parties meet in the Town at last, it's well enough; So here, let this Communing without our own Hearts, be in what method it will, if it do but produce the Effects it should do, it is commendable, and acceptable to Almighty God.

Nor is it necessary, that this Exercise must necessarily be perform'd at night. He that finds himself fittest, and freshest for it in the morning, may call himself to an account for yesterdays Actions at that time, and expect the same profit, and advantage by it? Some Christians are so watchful and jealous over their Thoughts, and Words, and Actions, and Desires, that this Self-examination is their constant attendant, where-ever they go; and they have got such a habit of it, that whenever they think, or speak, or act, they immediately bring all to this Touch-stone, and weigh it in this Balance; they have a Scheme of the Will and

and Precepts of God in their Minds ; and if any Action of theirs chance but in the least to clash with Gods Will,their Hearts presently smite them ; they are presently aware of it, and they cry presently, Lord, be merciful unto me a Sinner ! And such persons need not tye themselves exactly to an hour either morning, or evening, who do nothing else in a manner, but examine themselves all day.

Persons who are arriv'd to a habit of Goodness , may dispatch this task with greater ease, than others, by putting only a few questions to their Souls, such as are

1. *What company have I been in to day, and what was my discourse and behaviour ?*
2. *What good have I done to day either to mine own Soul, or to others ?*
3. *What good thoughts have I entertain'd ?*
4. *How have I managed my Devotions ?*
5. *Have I said, or done any thing whereby either God or man might justly be offended ?*

And now what Arguments, what Motives, what Incentives, shall I give you to oblige you to venture on this Exercise : God saw how necessary, how expedient

pedient it was for your Souls, and therefore commanded it. He that sees all things, saw, how this would make you like Trees planted by the Rivers of Waters, which bring forth their fruit in due season, and therefore spoke the Word and order'd it; yet Good God! How loath are the generality of you to learn this Lesson! How like Brutes do many of you go to Bed, without any consideration, without any reflection, without asking your Hearts, whether you have done good, or evil! You sin and are not concern'd at it, you run on in your Errors, and feel no compunctions; you offend God, and do not tremble at it; you wrong your Souls, and are not troubled at it, and all, because you will not come to this Self-examination at night. What makes you so backward to this Exercise? What makes you go to it, as Malefactors do to the place of Execution? What makes you shun this Watch tower, as if it were as bad, as the Valley of *Hinnom*? You are sick, desperately sick, why should you be loath to know it? God tells you, that you are sick, the Ministers of the Gospel tell you, that you are sick, your own Consciences tell you, that you are sick, the Word tells

tells you that you are sick, and is it not worth enquiring, whether you are so or no? What, if it should be so? Do not you deserve to die, that will not understand, or be sensible, that a mighty Distemper is upon you, a Distemper that will certainly kill you, if not prevented? Had not you better believe God, who cannot fright you with Bugbears, and believe your Ministers, that seek your welfare, and your Consciences, that wish, you may be happy, and the Word, that would open your eyes, than a few Lusts that care not what becomes of you, after a few years Revelling here? The Exercise, I exhort you to, is so rational, that one would think Motives are altogether needless; yet to prevent that Plea, that you know not, why you should discommode your selves in this manner:

i. This is exceeding profitable Work; Profit is a mighty bait to you in other Concerns, and why can it not be so here? Yes, I know the reason, it would move, and perswade you as much in the case before us, if you could grasp, and feel the Profit; However, you believe, you have Souls, as well as Bodies, and since you grant, your Souls do not stand for Cyphers, sure, you must allow, that the

Profit, your Souls receive, is of moment, and deserves to be look'd after ; and the profit , this Exercise yields, is this, It makes you acquainted with your selves, Alas ! What doth it signifie to be acquainted with your Estates , with the number of your Houses, with the number of your Sheep, and Oxen, with your yearly Rent, and what is like to come in from such a place , and what is likely to come in from another , how many Trees are upon your Grounds, and what Portions you are able to give with your Children , while you are unacquainted with your selves? This Self-examination will tell you , what it is that aileth you, what you may trust to , what the bent and byass of your Hearts is , what is in the most secret recesses of your Souls , whether God be in you, and whether you are guided by his Spirit, or whether Satan have taken possession of you, whether you are in a safe, or dangerous state, where you are defective, where you fail, and where you do amiss , what hopes you have, and whether those hopes be wellgrounded , whether your Faith be Gold, or Dross, whether you have a share in the Benefits of Christ's Death, and Passion, what God hath done for  
you,

you, whether he hath manifested himself to you, what power he hath given you, what influences he hath imparted to you; what degrees of holiness, what joy, what comfort, what peace he hath communicated to you, what corruptions you must chiefly pray against, what temptations you must watch against, what sins are most likely to eclipse your Glory, what are the fittest means to mortifie your Lusts, where your weakness lies, where you lie most open to the Devils assaults, where you must fortifie yourselves, &c. All this you may come to know by means of this Exercise; and if a General think it profitable to know the number of his Souldiers, that he may sit down, and consult, whether he be able with Ten thousand to meet him, that comes against him, with Twenty thousand; if a Master of a Family think it profitable to know, what persons there are in his house, how many, and how qualified, that he may proportion his Expences to their number; if a Tradesman think it profitable to know, what Goods, there are in his Shop, what Commodities in his Ware-house, that he may gratifie his Customers; if the Artificer think it profitable to know the motions

of the Clock, he hath made, that he may be able to mend it when out of order ? if a Farmer think it profitable to know, what Corn there is upon his Ground, how his Barns are stored , and whether his Fruit will turn to account or no, that he may set such Prizes on it, as it deserves, certainly a Christian must needs think it profitable to be acquainted with himself, for hereby he may prevent the day of Clouds and thick darkness, and move God to repent himself of the evil, which he hath said, he will do unto him, and do it not.

To know the Motion of the Sun and Moon, and Stars, is not so profitable , as to know my self , and to be sensible of mine infirmities , gives me far greater light , than if I were skill'd in all the virtues of Plants and Shrubs, and Minerals. If I know my self, I take the readiest way to know God too ; and we are assured, that to know him , and Christ, whom he hath sent , is to have eternal life.

The Heathens had reason to cry up *Chilon*, for making this the principle of all Virtues, *Know thy self*; and indeed, he that cares not for knowing the constitution and complexion of his inward man,

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is a Sot, and weaker in his Intellectuals, than *Thales*, who while he was poring on the Stars above, fell into a dangerous Pit below; Had a man read all the Books in the World, and yet took no account of himself, in Gods sight he [would pass for a very ignorant man, and the day of Judgment would find him a Fool, though he had been Keeper of *Ptolomy's Library*. St. *Bernard* <sup>Bernard.</sup> faith most truly, *Let thy Meditation, and Contemplation be-* lib. 2. de *gin at thy self, Be not searching in vain* Confid. ad Eugen. *into things without thee, while thou ne-* Pap. *glectest thy self.* If thou art *Wise*, thou *lovest thy Wisdom*, if thou art a *Stranger* to thy self; and though thou knowest all *Mysteries, the Secrets of the Earth, and the deep things of the Sea*, while thou art unknown to thy self, thou art like a *Man, that builds a House without laying the Foundation, and instead of erecting a Fabric, prepares for Ruine, and Destruction.* Whatever thou erectest without thy self, will be but, like a heap of dust, which the Wind will soon scatter, and disperse abroad: but learning to know thy self, thou drinkest of thine own *Fountain, and this is to sit down in the lowest place, that thou mayst be exalted in due time.*

*The Best Exercise.*

2. Where men dare be so just, and kind to themselves, as to Commune with their own hearts about the Words, Thoughts, and Actions of the day there they discover, that the Word of God is fallen on good ground, and that they do receive it in a good and honest Heart, and keep it and bring forth Fruit with patience. Upon this qualification depend all the Blessings of the Bible. No man must ever hope to be saved, that is not wrought upon by the Word of God, where this makes no impression, men are given up to hard Hearts, and reprobate Minds.

*Because thine Heart was tender, and thou didst humble thy self before God, and didst rend thy Cloaths, and weep before me, I have even heard thee also,* saith the Lord,

**2 Chron. 34. 27.** Self-examination is a Testimony of a tender Heart, of a Heart that believes, and trembles, of a Heart, that takes notice of what God saith in his Word, and receives it with veneration, of a Heart, that is sensible, that God's Promises and Threatnings will certainly be fulfill'd, and accordingly fears, and hopes, and acts, and ventures, and follows the Lamb, whithersoever he goes.

3. That

3. That common Argument, Men al-  
ledge, as a discouragement from this Ex-  
ercise, I must use here, as a powerful  
Motive to oblige them to this Self ex-  
amination; The Devil hinders them, and  
dissuades them from it, they cry. But be-  
cause he doth dissuade you, therefore you  
have reason more vigorously to apply  
your selves to this Exercise; for he would  
fright you from it, but that he sees it  
will certainly make you leave his King-  
dom. As some in *Nero's* time who per-  
secuted the Christians, said, That the  
Christian Religion, could not but be good,  
and wholesom, and excellent, because so  
wicked a man, and so great a Monster  
fought against it; So this Self-examinati-  
on must needs be an excellent thing, be-  
cause the Devil uses so many stratagems  
to oppose it. His business is to ruine  
Souls, as ours is to save them; and there  
must needs be something more, than or-  
dinary in this Duty, because he throws  
in so many Impediments, and Remora's  
to put a stop to this advantageous Exer-  
cise.

4. Happy the Man, that is not afraid  
of judging himself, that can look into  
this Glafs, and is not ashamed to see his  
own Deformity, nor ashamed to behold

what manner of Man he is ; this is the Man of whom the Son of Man will not be ashamed before God and his holy Angels : He that loves to look upon himself, shall see and taste, how Sweet, and Gracious the Lord is. O how much safer is it to let our Children , I mean our Thoughts, and Words, and Actions , pass through this Fire now, than to leave our selves altogether to the Judgment of God in the last day ? By being our own Judges now, we may prevent the severity of the Judge of Quick, and Dead, in that day. By judging our selves every day , the strength of our Souls is renew'd , our Minds get new light, our Affections new encouragements, our Hearts new motives, and our inward Man new Arguments to shake off the clogs of Sin, and of a deceitful World.

God who cannot Err, and can sooner cease to be , than do any thing , that is amiss, yet had no sooner finished any of his Works, in the first Creation, but examined, and considered them immediately, which makes *Moses* take notice, that *Gen. i. 10.* *God saw, that it was Good*, no doubt, to shew us an example ; When the Lord *Jesus* shall one day appear in Robes of Cœlestial Light, and sit on the Throne of his

his Glory, and summon the careless World to come to Judgment. O how chearfully will the Man, that now sits Judge upon his own Actions, be able to present himself before that Dread Tribunal. His Heart will not suggest to him such fears, and terrors, as the Man will find, who hath not thought this Exercise worth his care: He will be able to look upon Christ as his Father, as his Friend, as his Advocate, as his Intercessor, as his Mediator, that will stand between him, and Gods anger; his Conscience will bid him take courage, and lift up his eyes with Joy, because his Redemption draws nigh. This must needs be so, for we are told by the Apostle, *If we would judge our selves, we should not be judged of the Lord, 1 Cor. 11. 31.* To judge our selves, is to walk after the Spirit, and to mind the things of the Spirit, and we know, there is no condemnation to them in *Christ Jesus*, who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit, *Rom. 8. 1.* when thus we call our selves to an account, we act like the Children of God, like Children, that are afraid of offending their Heavenly Father, and if Children then Heirs, Heirs of God, and Joyn't Heirs with Christ, *Rom. 8. 17.*

And

And these are the constant, daily, and standing Exercises which a Man, or Woman that names the Name of Christ, must necessarily apply themselves to, if they will not rest in a form of Godliness, and delude their own Souls; Christianity is no idle Calling, and they that stroak themselves for being Christians, and sit with folded Arms, and yawn, and stretch themselves upon their Couches, have learn'd their Divinity of the Devil. *Work hard*, is the Christians Motto, and there is nothing implies a greater contradiction than Idleness, and Christianity. Shall any man talk of Ease, and Softness, that in his Baptism hath vow'd himself to a continual Warfare, and engaged himself to fight under the Banner of *Jesus*? The time of

*Vid. Chrys. in 2 Epist. ad Timoth. Hom. 8.* rest is to come, the present time is designed for Labour, and Trouble. A Christian must not look for rest here, God hath promised him no such thing, till he comes to Heaven. Nothing in Nature is idle, and shall a Christian be the only idle thing in the World?

I know there is no man but finds some Business or other to divert his Thoughts, but in vain, Sirs, do you talk of Business, while the Business of your Souls lies at six and sevens. No Worldly Employ-

ployment deserves the Name of Business in comparison of this , we speak of. These Exercises are the Busines, we come into the World for, and he is idle , that doth not work the work of God. Did ever any man hire a day-Labourer, to see him only Eat lustily, or Walk up and down in the House, with his Hands in his Pocket? And can we be so unreasonable as to think Christ hires us to take our pleasure here, when he hath so much work for us to do? Day-Labourers spend the greatest part of the day about their Masters Work, and employ but an hour or so, in Eating, so must the greatest part of our time be spent in our Great Masters Work, and the least in our worldly Busines. Not that a man is obliged , of the Twelve hours of the day to spend Nine or Ten in Praying, and Reading, and but Two or Three in his Busines : but as our worldly Busines must be follow'd with industry, and care, for the support of our selves and Families, so in the midst of that, our Great Masters Work must be carried on, and in the very works of our Calling, his Will, which forbids us to Act his Law, must be so eye'd and minded, that when that and our Business come to clash, our Busines must give way to the other, and this

this is to spend the greatest part of our time in his Service, when not onely in our set Devotions, but in the very works of our Calling, we make his Will a Lan-thorn to our Feet. The Work our Master hath to do for us, are these Exercises, and he that said, *Go to the Ant,* *Prov. 6. 6. thou Sluggard, and consider her ways, and be wise,* certainly never intended we should sail on a gentle stream to the Port of Glo-ry.

Which of the two do we count most useful, a Ship that lies still in the Har-bour, or that which encounters with the Waves and Billows of the Sea? the stan-ding Water, or the flowing Stream? the Iron that lies by, or that which we do daily take pains about? And which of the two do you think, can God favourably look upon, the Soul that's busie, and be-stirs her self, is industrious and laborious to make sure of Heaven, or the Soul, that lies dissolv'd in Ease and Idleness? While *David* was engaged in a War, he had no leisure to defile himself with *Bathsheba*; while *Solomon* was busie in building the Temple, his Women could not seduce his Heart; while *Sampson* was fighting with the *Philistines*, *Dalilah* could not entice him; so here, while you are

are busie in these Exercises, you cannot be taken Captive by the Devil. There are indeed men, that are worthy of their Hire, but then they are Labourers, not Loiterers ; and though Christ promised refreshment, yet it is to those alone, who have tired themselves with Working, and take their Masters Yoak upon them, and learn to exercise themselves, as he did,  
*Mat. 11. 28.*

These Exercises will make you capable of being admitted to a very great intimacy and friendship with the infinite Majesty of Heaven, *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him*, saith the Man that had found it by experience, *Psal. 25. 14.* Through these Exercises the Soul comes to be defecated from her dross, from carnal Lusts, and Affections, and is made fit company for the Deity, for so enamoured is God with these Exercises, that the Soul that runs in this Race, is in a capacity of drinking of the Rivers of Gods Pleasures; *O how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee!* *Psal. 31. 19.*

Gods Goodness is a Treasure inexhaustible, a Subject so full of Charms, that the more a Man thinks of it, the more he may : the thoughts of it put the  
Soul

Soul into a kind of Fever, for the more she drinks of this living water of life, the more she may ; other Arts and Sciences a man may bring to perfection, and see the utmost of them ; but Gods Goodness, there is no coming to the top of it ; the Soul that contemplates it this hour, sees in it new Mysteries the next ; and he that is ravished with the contemplation of it to day, is ready to lose his Reason in the admiration of it to morrow. It is a Fountain of Life, which sends forth a thousand Streams, and yet is as full as ever. It is the hiding place of a Holy Soul, and the Scripture means nothing else by Gods Banqueting-House, but his Goodness. This enriches the Soul beyond all the Wealth, that the World boasts of ; and I know not what name to give to its Influences ; for like the heat of Fire, they can onely be felt, but cannot be painted.

It is the sweetest Labyrinth for a Man of Thoughts to lose himself in, and the more a man is lost in it, the greater pleasure, he feels, and lies softer, than the *Sybarite* upon his Bed of Roses, Humane Tongue is not able to describe it, and the safest way is to stand amaz'd at it, and to say nothing, silence being the truest sign

sign of admiration. Not one in an hundred knows, what it means, and nothing but a Beam of Heaven let into the Mind, can give the Soul any lively apprehensions of it. It is a thing that affects the whole Body, as well as the Soul, and if the Soul feels, what it is, its ready to wish for more Souls, and Bodies to participate of the satisfaction. Thousands feed upon this Goodness, yet have no fence of it, and were all men sensible of it, there is not one would go to Hell, or turn Proctor for the Devil. If it be seen clearly, it charms, and the Understanding that beholds it without a Glass, and with open face, must protest it is the sweetest, and most reviving Cordial imaginable.

This lively fence of his Goodness, the Almighty vouchsafes to those that thus exercise themselves unto Godliness, for these are the men that fear him ; The Lord is their Shepherd, and they shall not want, they shall not want a friend in adversity, when Lovers, and Friends, are put far from them, and their acquaintance into darkness, God will be their Friend, when they have no person to advise or to consult with, or to make their complaints to, he will guide them by his Coun-

Counsel, when their Flesh, and their Heart faileth, and all Creatures fail them, God will be their Strength and their Portion for ever ; He'll hear their cry, they shall unbosome themselves unto him, and he'll bow down his Ears to them, tell their  
I sal. 56.8. wandrings, put their Tears in his Bottle, and write all their sighs and groans in his Book. What a comfort is it to have a Bosom-friend here on Earth, to whom we can speak our Minds, who'll bear the Burthen with us, and compassionate, and pity us, and to whom we can unlock, and open the very inside of our Hearts : But then , what a comfort must it be to have God for my Friend , whom I can have recourse to in all my Necessities, make my moan to, and tell him , how my Heart is griev'd, who will not laugh at my Calamity, nor mock , when my fear comes, whose Bowels yearn over me, who will advise me for the best , bid me lay my wearied head in his Bosom, direct me to the breasts of consolation, from which I may suck life, and vigour, deal sincerely with me, act for me , speak for me, and contrive my good, and be concerned for me , as if my necessities were his own.

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Such honour have all his Saints; so kind, so good, so wonderfully kind is God to all such, as exercise themselves unto Godliness, they shall want nothing that's necessary either for Soul, or Body. Their Souls shall be fed with the Promises of the Gospel, guided by the Eternal Spirit, provided for from the Store-house of Grace, and Mercy, nay their Bodies shall never want, and God will either bleſs their Industry, and Labours of their Callings, as he did St. Paul's diligence, 2 Thess. 3. 8. or turn the Hearts of other men towards them, who shall relieve them, assist them, receive them, and redress their Grievances, as he did in the Case of *Onesimus*, *Philem*, v. 12. or send an Angel from Heaven, to feed them, as he did *Elijah*, 1 Reg. 19. 5. Nay, suppose that it should be expedient for Gods Glory, that they suffer want of Necessaries, yet even then, they shall not want Grace to support them, Courage to bear up under it, Joy to keep their Heads above Water, and Resolution to trust in him, though the Lord should kill them, as we see, 2 Cor. 12. 9.

Alas! What can they want, while God supports them? God! that Horn of Plenty, that Ocean of Goodness, that

Sea of Kindness, that Perfection of Beauty, that comprehensive Light, that inexhaustible Fountain of Bliss, that Centre of Happiness, that Rock of Ages, that Spring of Comfort, that Treasure of Beatitude, that Store-house of Provision, whose Years do not fail, whose Municifcence never decays, who can never be Poor, whose Liberality is infinite, who Gives before Men Ask, who is Present, when he seems to be Absent, whose Love no Rhetorick can explain, whose Riches the Tongues of Angels cannot reach, and you may as well say, that *Solomon* in all his Glory was in Want, as think, that they whose Shepherd God is, can be in Want. They want no other Shepherd but him, no other Comforter but him, no other Riches but him, no other Pleasure but him, no other Friend but him, no other King, no other Master, no other Father, but him ; if they want a Father, he'll be more to them than a Father ; if they want a Mother, a Sister, or a Brother, he will be more to them, than all these can be, as they that have the Light of the Sun, have more, than if they had an hundred Candles in the Room; for they have him who is All-in-all ; so that in their very wants, they

they can rejoice in him , in their very Misery they can boast of him , in their danger confide in him,in their necessities roll all their cares upon him , and when Heaven and Earth are like to be confounded , and mingled together, look up, and cry , God is our refuge , a present help in the time of trouble, therefore will we not fear , though the Earth be moved, and though the Hills be carried into the midst of the Sea, *Psal. 46.*

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What if they have not the outward Comforts of this present World, the Reward God intends them, lies beyond this Earth. These outward Conveniences are Rewards too low, and mean, for God to bestow, and there would be no difference between such men, and those that have their Portion in this life, should God heap upon them such Blessings of his Left-hand ; God lets them want these outward ornaments on purpose, to let the World know, that he hath nobler things in store for them , not but that sometimes even those , that are diligent in these Exercises, have much of this Worlds Goods, but that doth not make them a whit the happier , but onely encreaseth their Account , and obliges them to

greater Liberality, and greater circumspection in their Stewardship.

Behold, Christians! To what still Streams, to what pleasant Pastures these Exercises lead you! what a rich Table they prepare for you in the presence of your Enemies; how they Anoint your Heads, and make your Cups run over. These Exercises attract the noblest Spectators imaginable. Have not you read, have not you heard, what the presence of a Monarch can do with Wrestlers, and Men of Activity? What valiant Acts have some Men perform'd in the Olympick Games, (whence the word *Exercising unto Godliness* borrows its name) when some great Princes have look'd on! Men have attempted to do more than Men, when the presence of a King hath enlivend their endeavours; and as tedious as these Exercises may seem to some of you, yet is not the company, that beholds your fight and labours motive enough to descend into the field? Behold the Holy, Blessed, and Glorious Trinity becomes a Spectator; The Father is present, to applaud the attempt; The Son present to encourage it; The Holy Ghost present to crown it, and round about the Throne of this bright Majesty stand the Myriades

Myriades of Angels, and they all look on.

Christian, fancy thou seest *David* fighting with *Goliath* in a Vally between two vast Mountains, while on the one there lies encamped the Army of the *Philistines*, on the other, the Host of *Israel*, think what Courage and Resolution it must infuse into the young Soldiers heart, to see himself gazed and stared on by two Armies of Friends and Enemies! Why? thy Condition, while thou exercisest thy self unto Godliness is the same, thou standest in this Vally of Tears, on one Hill stands the Great God of Heaven and Earth, with all the Host of Heaven, and beholds, what thou art doing, one the other are spread all the Legions of Hellish Furies, ready to triumph in thy fall: Can there be a greater encouragement, than to see a Glorious God before thee ready to set the Lawrel on thy Temples, if thou darest follow after, that thou may'st apprehend that, for which thou art also apprehended of *Christ Jesus*? Nay, he calls to thee from the Hills of Heaven; *Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine, when thou passest through the Waters, I will be with thee, and through<sup>2</sup>* Isai. 43. 1

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the Rivers, they shall not overflow thee, when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee, and shall not this tempt thee to do more than thy careless Neighbours, more than nature will agree to, more than thy sensual Appetite will like of, more than the sober Heathens do, and shall not this make thy Righteousness surmount that of *Hypocrites*, and painted Sepulchres? Arise, and depart, for here is not thy rest? Rest! Ay, that's the glorious Fruit of this Tree of Life, that's the comfort which these Exercises end in. The weary day-labourer after his toilsom Work in the Field, the Seaman after his hard tugging at the Oar, and labouring in Storms, and Tempests, does not rest so sweetly, as he that exerciles himself day and night unto Godliness; for he rests on the down of Angels, on the Wings of *Cherubims*, on the Breast of *Jesus*, and shall rest ere long in *Abraham's* Bosom, in the Bosom of Glory, in the Bosom of Everlasting Mercy, where life is to be found in its perfection, life without sorrow, life without fear, life without corruption, life without disturbance, life without change, life without deformity, life without discontent, life without disho-

dishonour, life without envy, life without decay, where no Adversary comes to molest it, no Sin to Spoil its Beauty, no Temptation to break its Order, no Devil to discompose its Harmony, where the Day is everlasting, the Hours measured by Eternity, and Months and Years by infinity of Bliss and Glory.

Go to now, ye careless Men, that are more frightened by these Exercises, than by all the terrors of the burning Lake: As laborious as these Exercises seem to be, without them expect no Rest, no Peace, no Tranquillity; For there is no peace Ezai. 57. faith my God unto the Wicked. Expect 21. Grief, Trouble, Anguish, despairing Thoughts, a turbulent Soul, an affrighted Conscience, for these must certainly be the Portion of your Cup one day. How should your life end in rest, who never tried your strength in these Exercises? Lift up your Eyes and behold the man that exercises himself unto Godliness; Hear what becomes of him at his death; *Blessed are the Dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth, yea saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their Labours, and their Works do follow them,* Rev: 14.13.

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There remains therefore a Rest for the People of God, a Rest, which Tempests cannot shake, Storms cannot annoy, Frosts cannot chill, and Heats cannot consume ; a Rest, where there is Joy without Mourning, Tranquillity without Labour, Honour without a Period, Wealth without danger of losing it, Beatitude without the least shadow of Calamity. What Songs ? What Hymns ? What Musick ? What Praises ? What Hallelujahs ? What Melody ? What Harmony is to be met with there ? Where the Citizens of Heaven are all Organists, and the Spirits of Men made perfect joyn in perpetual Concert, to sing Salvation to our Lord, and to the Lamb for ever and ever ; Where Bitterness and Gall have no place, where Wickedness, and Malice must never look in, where Want and Poverty must for ever cease, where Quarrelling and Accusing and Impleading one another will all have done, where all Violence and Discord dies, and all Grief, and Pain, and Anguish is swallow'd up in an Eternal Jubilee.

We read of Men, as of *Dioclesian*, of *Spartacus*, of *Æneas*, of *Rustan*, of *Mahomet*, that from Shepherds and mean Men, have come to be great Lords and Empe-

Emperors ; but this is nothing to the happiness, that he can be confident of, that seriously exercises himself in the Task, I have laid down ; the time will come, I see the joyful day approaching, I see it by the Eyes of Faith, when this humble Soul, this laborious Saint, this Self-denying Christian, this contemptible Man shall change his Rags into Purple Robes, and be translated from a momentary Sorrow to an Eternity of Rest and Satisfaction, where the Lamb that is in the mid'st of the Throne shall feed him, and shall lead him unto living Fountains of Waters, and God shall wipe all Tears from his Eyes ; Then shall be fulfilled the saying, that is written, They that Sow in Tears, shall Reap in Joy ; he that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious Seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his Sheaves with him.

Psal. 126:  
5, 6.

While young *Hercules*, saith the *Apolo- vid. Basil.*  
*logue*, was doubting with himself, which *Tom. 1.*  
way he should take, whether that *Hom.*  
of Vice, or the other of Virtue, behold, *24 ad Ado-*  
there appeared to him, two Women, one *lescentus.*  
gloriously Apparell'd, with tempting  
Looks, and gay Attire, and a flowing  
Mantle, that wanton'd in the Air, promi-  
sing

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sing him present satisfaction, and whatever his sensual Appetite could desire; but saying nothing of what would be the exit or consequence of all this; the other stood aloof, with a meager Face, in a ragged Garb, and torn Cloaths, promising nothing but Sweat, and Labour, and danger at first, but behind her was a Scene of Triumph, and at the end of the Swords, and Daggers that encompassed her, hung Pearls and Rubies, and the richest Stones. The valiant man soon found out the Cheat of the former, and resolutely chose to become a Disciple of the other.

Thus acts the Man, that exercises himself unto Godliness, he slighteth Pleasure, and embraceth Labour; for he knows that bitter beginnings, will have a glorious end; and as *Jason* fought his way through Serpents, and wild Bulls, to get the Golden Fleece, and became Master of it, so he swims contentedly through a Sea of Wormwood to find a new World of sweetnes, and satisfaction; and the years, during which he serves for this *Rachel*, seem to him, but as so many days, for he loves what he sees not, and believes what he cannot grasp, yet believing he rejoices, with joy unspeakable and full of Glory.

Hither-

Hitherto I have discoursed of the ordinary, constant, and daily Exercises of a Christian. The extraordinary follow in order, and they are,

1. VOWING,
2. FASTING,
3. WATCHING, *and*
4. SELF-REVENGE.

I call them Extraordinary, because they are to be used but now and then, when either some great corruption is to be subdued, or our Devotion wants quickning, or when God's Glory requires it, or when our Neighbours welfare and edification is to be signally promoted; To make these Exercises daily, and constant, were the way to ruine the body, and to obstruct the Soul in her flights to Heaven, and instead of honouring God, to render our selves incapable of his Service. They are in the nature of Salt and Vinegar, to give a relish to our Spiritual Food, but they would be but ill

*The Best Exercise.*

ill Meat, were they made our Dyet: Some that have attempted to make them their daily Employment, have expos'd themselves to the Devils Tyranny, and by going farther than God design'd, or requir'd, have been suffer'd to fall into unspeakable inconveniences.

That using severities upon our selves is sometimes necessary, is evident from hence, because our Bodies naturally are enemies to our Souls, and nothing is so great a clog to our Spirits, as our sensual Appetite. The more the Body is denied, the freer is the Soul in her Motions, and the less the Flesh is regarded, the more the Spirit soars and mounts up to its Center. It is certainly our indulging our carnal ease so much, that makes us dull and lazie in God's Service, and had we the art of crossing Flesh and Blood, our Duties would be perform'd, with greater life and servency. But here the Golden mean must be used, and to avoid extremes, is without doubt, the safest way we can walk in. As a man by a total neglect of these Exercises, will make but a very slow progress in Religion, so he that uses them too much, may fall into divers Snares, and Temptations. Discretion must be the Rule, and Prudence the

the Guide in things of this nature. Those that want this compass, must suffer themselves to be entirely guided by wiser Men; and Lay-men, whose occasions will not permit them to consider of every step of the way, must here resign themselves to the guidance and conduct of serious and able Ministers, who, if they have any fence of the power of Godliness, will be ready to rejoice at the Work, and readily direct them, that they may get safe to Heaven.

I do not deny, but that these Exercises have been, and are abused in the Church of *Rome*, but shall their perverting the Primitive Institution, make us regardless of the Duty? and because they go beyond the just bounds of these Severities, must they therefore be quite laid aside, and despised as useless? Who ever rejected Wine, because Men made themselves drunk with it? Or did ever any man forswear eating Meat, because the Glutton eats till he makes himself sick with it? I shall speak distinctly of these Extraordinary Exercises, and in each of them lay down certain Rules, that must be observed in the practice, to free them from the brand of Will-worship, Superstition, or sinful voluntary Humility.

I. Ex-

*I. Extraordinary Exercise.*

And this is *Making Vows*; An Exercise used and practised by the Saints before the Law, *Gen. 28. 20.* under the Law, *Psal. 116. 14, 18.* and under the Gospel, *Act. 18. 18. Act. 21. 23, 24.* and commanded, *Psal. 76. 11.* That a Vow is a deliberate, voluntary, solemn Promise made to Almighty God of things Lawful, and Possible, is so known a thing, that I need not insist much upon the definition. Every purpose is no Vow, nor is a bare intention to do such a thing, to be reckoned among these greater obligations of the Soul. A Vow made in drink is a Sin, but no Vow, because a Vow requires the presence of Reason, and Deliberation, and the same may be said of a Vow made in the height of Anger and Passion. To oblige my self by a Vow to do a thing that is forbid by the Law of God, is Impiety, or to Vow a thing, which lies not in my power to perform, is Folly and Detraction. Not to repent of such Vows, is to continue in Sin, and the longer the Repentance is deferred, the more we aggravate our Condemnation. Of this nature were those Vows, the Jews made to the prejudice

judice of their Parents, whereof Christ speaks, *Mat. 17.4,5.* *It is a gift by whatsoe'er thou mightest be profited by me,* i.e. a Vow whereby Children that had any ill will to their Parents, Vow'd their Goods and Monies to the use of the Church, and by that means pretended, they could not break their Vow, and relieve their Parents.

To make Vows, is as lawful now, as it was in the days of *Moses*; nor doth any command of the Gospel forbid us to enter into such Engagements. Vowing is not an Appendix of the Ceremonial Worship, but a dictate of the Law of Nature, and who knows not, how that the Gentiles by the instinct of this have made such Vows in time of Danger and Necessity. As we are Christians, we are to give all diligence to make our Calling and Election sure, and to make use of all *Phil. 4.8.* wholesome things that may promote Salvation; and since these Vows do as much promote Religion as any other means, it's but reason, we should think of them, and not neglect such useful Obligations. And to direct my Reader in this Exercise, I shall shew him, 1. when and upon what occasions such Vows may, and must be made; and, 2. what Rules must

be observ'd in the making. 3. Encourage him to the making of them. And, 4. Enforce the Obligation to keep them after they are made.

I. When and upon what occasions such Vows may, and must be made. And to this I answer,

I. *In time of great Trouble and Necessity.* *I will go into thy House with Burnt-Offerings, I will pay thee my Vows, which my lips have utter'd, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble,* saith the Royal Psalmist, *Psal. 66. 13, 14.* It was a time of fear, and danger, when Jacob enter'd into a Vow to consecrate the Tenth part of his Income unto God, and Pious uses, *Gen. 28, 20.* And it's like, it was in imitation of him, that *Alban* the British King vow'd the Tenth part of all his Goods to God, when he was assaul-ted by the Normans; And such Vows are ordinarily made upon condition, that God do actually grant the Blessing, we expect. So the Children of *Israel*, *Numb. 21. 2.* If thou wilt indeed deliver this people into my hands, then I will utterly destroy their Cities; and so *Clodoveus* the French King justly vowed, when oppressed by the *Almaines*, that if God would give him the Victory, he would certain-

certainly become a Christian. And in the same manner , a Christian may lawfully Vow in sickness, that if God will restore him, he will keep the day of his deliverance holy unto the Lord ; or if in a Storm at Sea, that if God shall be pleased to bring him safe to shoar , he will give an hundred or two hundred Pounds , or more, to some Hospital. And though God is no Merchant , that sells his Gifts or Blessings , yet in these Cases , like an indulgent Master , he is willing to encourage us to our Duty , and to bring us to a fence of his Mercy , and he is so far from taking these conditions in our Vows ill , that very often , he grants the Blessing , for which we bound our Souls , on purpose to make us in love with his Service ; and though the names of those that have Vowed , and yet after their Vows have perished are not written down upon Tables , as the Atheist *Diagoras* scoffingly said , yet where God doth not grant the Mercy , that is desir'd in the Vow , it is either , because he sees that the person Vowing is not in good earnest resolv'd to perform his promise , or because the grant of the Blessing desired would prove an occasion of his greater dissoluteness , or because he intends better things to

the man that Vows , than the things he begs, or hopes upon his Vow to enjoy.

II. After some signal deliverance from Danger and Calamity. To Vow after some such Mercy, is a thing so natural with ingenuous Spirits , that even the good-natur'd Seamen in *Jonas*, c. 1. 16. though they were Heathens, when the Sea ceased from raging, feared the *Lord exceedingly*; and offer'd a Sacrifice unto the *Lord*, and made Vows. Prodigious deliverances strike the Soul into amazement , and a Man that hath any fence of the unexpected favour , can do no les than Vow unto God some signal Devotion by way of Gratitude for the Mercy. The Deliverance is great and signal , and the Devotion ought to be so too. The Vow shews, that the Gratitude is hearty , and nothing is so great an Argument, that the fence of the Mercy is vigorous, and lively, as when we bind our selves to make returns some way suitable to Gods Benignity. It cannot but be pleasing to God upon such occasions, to Vow, that either we will pray seven times a day with *David*, or that we will allow something more, than ordinary for charitable uses, or that we will

will be more diligent in visiting the Sick, the Widow, and the Fatherless, or that we will go into such ill company no more, or that we will shun such occasions of evil, or that we will take care of some poor Children, and either breed them up, or keep them at School, or get them to be instructed in the Principles of Religion, or that we will employ so much time every day in working for indigent and distressed persons, &c. Such things as these are or may be all within our own power, and consequently may lawfully be Vow'd, and we have reason to believe, that for Christ's sake God will behold these Free-will Offerings with a Gracious eye, because they proceed from love; and he that dwells in Love, dwells in God, and God in him, saith the Apostle, 1 Job. 5. 16.

III. *When some strong Corruption is to be subdued, and an easie matter will not make it yield.* When after many weak purposes, we relapse into the Sin, and notwithstanding our Resolutions against it now and then, suffer our selves to be misled into it. In such Cases where gentle Remedies will do no good, it's fit, yea necessary, to use stronger Medicines; and where our Flesh doth baffle our good

purposes, to cross it with stronger Vows. He that finds himself inclined to drink immoderately, when he comes into company, hath no better way to overcome the Sin, than by Vowing, either not to drink at all in such Societies, or to drink but one Glass and no more, or to abstain from such a Liquor, which is apt to intoxicate him, or not to come into company which he knows, will tempt him to intemperance. The man that finds himself subject to carnal pollutions, may certainly forbear them, if he will enter into solemn Vows, never to be guilty of such sins again. If the Swearer would make a Vow to God to give a Crown to the Poor, if ever he swear again, without all peradventure the Sin in a short time would die, provided he hath Conscience enough to keep his Vow; And all grosser Sins, as gaming, obscene discourses, and Atheistical talk, &c. may be vanquished thus. If the Adulterer would solemnly Vow, and add Imprecations to his Vow, not to come to his Harlot again, and the Fornicator, not to embrace the strange Woman again, they might break the neck of these dreadful sins, and indeed one such Vow shall do more, than twenty fainter Purposes, or Prayers.

In

In lesser Sins, and sins of infirmity , it is not so safe to Vow , as in the other, because we are too apt to be surprized into such Errours, and do commit them before we are aware , yet he that Vows to do something , that's irksome to Flesh, and Blood, in case he yields to any lesser sin; by example, in case he lies in Jest, or in case he breaks out into a Passion, &c. takes the readiest way to subdue the corruption , and to be Master of his Spirit ; As to Vow , not to sin at all , would be rash and foolish , and promising a thing ordinarily impossible; so to Vow to mulct our selves, if we commit a trespass of infirmity, is to act like Wise men, and such as are in good earnest resolved to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of Flesh, and Spirit, and to perfect Holiness in the fear of God.

IV. *When we find a backwardness , or unwillingness upon our Spirits to do a duty, we find commanded , or are put upon by the secret instigation of our Consciences.* He that finds himself loath to pray three times a day, must Vow, that he will do so, and then he must doit, and whatever unwillingnes may remain after the Vow is past, time and use will make it easie. He that is loath to do good to the Man

that hath formerly wrong'd him, must Vow to God, that he will do it, and force himself to it. Nature, where it will not be led, must be drawn by violence, and though unwillingness in the performance of a Duty, makes no very sweet perfume in Heaven, yet that offering violence to our Natures, is a kind of conquering our selves, and consequently is an acceptable present to the great Rewarder of them that diligently seek him. This way he that was ioath to visit a Neighbour, against whom he had some prejudice, may be brought to a Christian temper again; and he, that would not sing Psalms, but at Church, may be reformed. This way the man that before cared not for good discourses, may come to speak of Spiritual thirgs with delight, and satisfaction, and he that was a Stranger to Hospitality may come to open his House and Heart to the Stranger and Traveller. In all these Cases, Vows are seasonable, and what Rules, are to be observ'd in Vowing, is the second particular I am to treat of.

2. The Rules that are fit to be taken notice of in this Exercise, are these following.

I. *These Vows must not be made to Saints;* for a Vow is a Religious Worship, and therefore to be given to none,  
but

but God. Among the Papists, it's true, such Vows are common, but we have not so learn'd Christ, nor did Antiquity allow this Profanation ; and though *Marcellina St. Ambrose's Sister* seems to have made a Vow to St. *Laurence* for her Brother *Satyrus*'s good Voyage ; yet do the words used by St. *Ambrose*, who relates the Story, import no such thing, for he tells his Sister, that by her Vows at St. *Laurence* the Martyrs, her Brothers safety was procured, and those Vows might be Vows to God made in St. *Laurence's* Church or Oratory, where the Bones of St. *Laurence* were buried, it is not necessary, to conclude, that the Vow was made to the Saint. However the practice of a Woman, is no Law, and had she made a Vow to the Saint by her Brothers approbation, we know who it was that said, *Vow and pay unto the Lord your God*, Psal. 76. 11. nor do we read in all the Word of God, that any Vows were ever made, but unto him that understands our thoughts afar off, and to whom it was said, *Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion, and unto thee shall the Vow be perform'd*, Psal. 65. 1. Nor do the later examples of *Chosroes King of Persia*, making a Vow to St. *Sergius*, of King *Pepin*.

*Vid. Baron.  
Annal.*

*Tom. 4. a i  
an. 383. sc. 2*

*15 qui ci-  
tat An-*

*brof. orat.  
in Fun-*

*fratr.*

*Tuis enim  
votis apud  
sanctum*

*Martyrem  
Laurentium  
impe-  
tratum*

*nunc ega-  
noscimus  
commea-  
tum.*

Vowing to St. *Suibert*, or of *Otho the Great* Vowing to St. *Laurence*, make the thing more lawful ; for an ill custom being once broacht, it shall not want Followers, if the subtle Prince of the Air can any way contribute to the itch of imitation.

II. *These Vows must be serious*, not only in respect of the matter, but in respect of the manner too. As to the matter,

*Si quis vo-*  
*verit se ab-*  
*flenturum* Vow, that he will ride abroad such a day  
*à laâte,* to take the Air, or go into his Garden  
*tunc lici-* *tum ipsife est* such an hour, or go and buy such a thing,  
*serum, si &* he stands in need of, or have such a dish  
*fero, concef-* of Meat for his dinner, &c. would make  
*sum est ei* *lac, si a ca-* a Jest of this Sacred Tye, and prophane  
*prohibitus* *se o tum ille* an Ordinance, which God looks upon  
*etipsife, si ve* te be of the greatest weight and moment.  
*st salitus,* And as to the manner of the performance,  
*vel non* *salitus, &c;* it's fit that the Vow should be accompa-  
*Massech.* nied with Prayer, and Supplications, for  
*N darim.* Gods assistance in the due performance,  
*c. 6. Miſhn.* and therefore the Greeks by one word  
*5.*

*Evg.* express both Vow and Prayer. Prayer sanctifies the Vow, and fastens the Soul in her resolution to keep it. Hence it was that the Saints of old, made their Vows, while they were on their knees, the same posture

posture that they used in Prayer. To this seriousness belongs sequestring our selves at that time, when we Vow, from all other Secular Businesses, and entring into our Closets, or retiring into places where no persons or diversitaments are like to distract us ; A Vow requires the attention of the whole Mind, and he that Vows while he is doing something else, shews he hath no mind to perform, what his lips have uttered. The man in *Plutarch* therefore play'd the fool with Heaven, that Vow'd he would throw himself from a Precipice, and when he came to it, chang'd his Mind, and null'd the Vow with this Jest, *I did not think that this Vow had need of another Vow to see the first effectually perform'd.* Those Heathen Philosophers, he speaks of in another place, were more rational, and serious, that Vow'd to abstain from their Wives, and to deny themselves of Wine a twelve-month ; and for some certain time to shun Lying, and consequently to Worship God by Continence ; for these Vows they made with great Solemnity, and from a fence of Virtue and Goodness, which made them very strict in the observance of those Promises.

III. In these Vows its fit, such limitati-  
ons

*Plutarch.*  
*de Lacon*  
*Apophth.*  
*Vid. &c lib.*  
*de irâ co-*  
*bib.*

ots should be added, as are necessary, and may free the mind from scruples afterwards, when they are to be perform'd. He that Vows to set aside a certain day in the Month for Fasting, and Prayer, had need except Sickness, and such other inconveniences as may endanger his Life, or Health in the performance; for if he do not, when such accidents do afterward happen, they are apt to distract the Mind, and while the Votary is tossed between his obligation to God, and the preservation of his Health, he makes his Breast like the troubled Sea, when it cannot rest. And though some Casuists think

*Vid. Maf. feb. Nedarim. c. 3. Mishna 1 & 3.* that upon such Accidents a man is free from Sin, if he do not keep his Vow, yet to a person, that is very Conscientious, it is not so satisfactory, as when himself hath made these Exceptions. Had

*אַרְבָּעָה אֶתְרָם הַתִּירֵה הַכִּים וְגַם Jephthah, Judg. 11. 30, 31.* observed this Rule, he had not brought that grief and anguish upon himself, which afterwards was ready to overwhelm him;

*Quatuor vota sanguinis ad sollempnem Vowing in general, that whatsoever videntur, vota persuasoriæ, should first meet him, upon his return vota Hyperbolica, vota errorum & vota necessitatem patientium, &c. Vota necessitatem patientium quæ sunt? Si quem voto obstrinxerit socius suis, ut comedat apud eum, ægrotaverit autem ipse, aut impediverit eum æqua, &c.*

from the Slaughter of the Children of *Ammon*, he would certainly Sacrifice, and Offer for a Burnt Offering, without any limitation, *provided it be fit to be Offer'd, or provided it be no rational Creature, or provided it be of the clean Cattle, that is in my possession, or provided it be not another Mans*; Vowing, I say, at large, without any such exception, when his Daughter met him, he knew not how to evade the obligation of the Vow, and therefore was forced, at least thought himself obliged to Sacrifice his only Child, *for he did unto her*, saith the Text, according to his Vow, which he had vow'd, vers.

39.

IV. When such Vows are made, it's fit we should write them down in a Book, or in Paper, that we may remember, what we have Vow'd, and what the particular things are, we have promis'd to the Almighty. The *Roman* Souldiers, when they went to War, having made certain Vows to God, used to write them on Tables, and fasten them to the Gates of the City, that they might be sure upon their return to pay their Vows. Our Memories are frail, and treacherous, and things are not so soon forgot, when committed to Paper, or a Book. The Oath God

made

*The Best Exercise.*

made against *Amaleck*, he caused to be written in a Book, *Exod.* 17. 14. and *Samuel* wrote the manner of the Kingdom in a Book, 1 *Sam.* 10. 21. and indeed remarkable Passages, or Occurrences deserve no less. Sicknes, Busines, or Divertisements may put things out of our Minds, whereas if they be noted, or written down, we can refresh our Memories, when we please, and remember the very circumstancos we were under when we did, or saw, or met with them. Vows are actions of great concernment; writing of them down gives us fresh suggestions of the occasion of such engagements, and serves to kindle a new zeal in us to perform them. When they are once past, there depends so much upon the observance of them, and the performance or non-performance of them, have so great an influence upon the happiness, or unhappiness even of our lives here on Earth, that they may justly be look'd upon, as things of the greatest moment, and therefore we cannot be too careful about them, and why may not writing down of our Vows be a Monument of our Sincerity, Seriousness, and Gratitude, as much as the Primitive Christians hanging up Boards, and Cloaths in the Church, which had  
on

on them the Picture of the Joynt, or Part of the Body, where they had been diseased, or distempered, after they were deliver'd, as a Testimony of their Thankfulness?

V. *The end of these Vows must be Gods Honour and Glory.* If the end be, that we may with greater liberty live in a certain Sin we delight in, the Vow is so far from tending to Gods Honour, that God is despised, and thought to be altogether such a one, as we our selves. Such Vows as have no good ends, I am afraid are too common in the Church of Rome, where Men by Vowing to go in Pilgrimage to such a Saints Shrine, or to Jerusalem, or to such a Chappel of our Blessed Lady, think they purchase a prerogative or priviledge to continue in those darling Sins, their Profit or Pleasure doth consist in, or to neglect some greater and weightier matter of the Law, and though this is call'd by their Votaries, seeking Gods Glory, yet whatever doth tend to the advancement, or cherishing of any sin, cannot possibly tend to Gods Glory, let mens pretences be what they will; for if the bare saying that I aim at Gods Glory, would serve turn, who almost would be damned, especially since  
men

men may plead, that they sin abundantly on purpose that Gods Grace may abound; in these Vows destruction of the body of sin must be chiefly aimed at; for God is honour'd by nothing so much, as by the ruine of the Devils Kingdom.

VI. *Commutations, and Dispensations of Vows must be slighted, as things alien from true Religion.* These Practises are common in the *Roman Church*. By Commutations of Vows, they mean changing the matter of one Vow into another, i. e. He that hath Vow'd to give so much to the Poor, changes the Vow, into a Vow of Fasting, and so breaks the former Vow, and substitutes an easier, or more convenient in the room of it. But these Commutations are no better than Falsifications; for in a Vow I bind my Soul to God, that I will do that particular thing I have mention'd, and not another, and if God doth not release me of the performance, who was the party, I promised to, what can humane Authority signifie in the case? It's true, where the thing I have Vow'd is either impossible or sinful, there I may lawfully make another Vow of something that's good or possible, but that doth not excuse the sin of the first, nor is this properly a Commutation, but

but a Testimony of my Repentance for  
the rashness of the former.

The same may be said of Dispensations, how should man be able to dispence with the non-performance of my Vow, who hath nothing to do with it, and most certainly, cannot give away Gods Right, who by my Vow is made absolute Owner of that Service, I resolve upon, and hath so great a Propriety in it by my voluntary resignation of it to him, that it is no less than Sacrilegious Vid. Con-  
sist. Sixt.  
4. Et si  
Dominici  
gregis, &c.  
Ludov.  
Lopez part.  
1. instruct.  
consc. c. 49.  
Jo. Azor.  
p. 1. Inf.  
moral. l.  
11. c. 19.

of the Court of *Rome* allow the Pope, besides his pretended Power to absolve Men of their Oaths, power to dispence with five sorts of Vows, with Vows to enter into Orders, with Vows of entring into a Monastery, and perpetual Chastity, with Vows to go in Pilgrimage to *Jerusalem*, with Vows to visit the Thresholds of the Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul, and with Vows to salute St. James of *Compostella*. Though we *Protestants* justly question whether some of these Vows be lawful, and whether the matter of them be not contrary to the Will of God, yet suppose, they are lawful, as the Church of *Rome* holds, who gave the Pope Authority to deliver men from the Obligations,

tions, they have engaged themselves in to God Almighty? These Vows all this while are not made to the Pope, but to God, and how comes the Bishop of *Rome* to know Gods Mind in this particular, or to give away Gods Right? By what Title or Prerogative? We should call him Knave, that should tempt a man to be false to his Word after he had past it to his Neighbour; and is it honesty to invade the Almighty's Power, and give people leave to be false to their God, when God hath given no other Rule in Vowing, but paying what is Vow'd to him? In Vows Promissory or Conditional, in which man is concern'd, there if the Party concern'd releases the Person Vowing, he may be excused from the actual performance of it, because in this case man is the principal person concern'd in the Vow, and God is onely made Judge and Witness: *b. e.* I Vow to Almighty God solemnly, that I will pay such a man Fifty pounds, which I owe him. If he remit me that Sum, I am not bound to pay it; for his remitting it is as much, as if I had actually paid it; and though the Vow was made unto God, yet it was made to him onely as a Witness, not as a Proprietor, and the thing to be performed

ed was not so much promised to be performed to him, as to my Neighbour, with whom I have dealings in the World. But this justifies not mans dispensing with a Vow made directly to God, as the Proprietor of the thing we Vow: *b. e.* If I Vow that I will be sure to Pray duly with my Family at Mornings, and at Nights, or that I will Catechize my Children, and Servants such a day, or that I will reprove such a Man in private for his Oaths, and sinful Life, &c. In such Vows, no Creature in the World can dispence with my Engagements, or assure me that I shall go unpunished, if I neglect the performance; for these do directly concern God and his Service, and Man is not the chief Party to whom the Promise is made, but God himself, who thereupon will expect to see the Vows fulfill'd according to the due intention of the Mind.

It's true, *Numb. 30. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.* a Father, and a Husband are permitted to dispence with the Vows, the one of his Daughter, the other of his Wife, if they hear of it, and think the dispensation necessary, and convenient; but this *Vid. Mas. sech. Net- darim. c. 11.* permission cannot extend to Superiors in general, else what Honesty or Faith could be expected in the World, if infe-

Hours could be dispensed with by those  
 that are above them. The Jewish Com-  
 mentators restrain those Dispensations to  
 the Vows of Fasting and Self-denial only,  
 and so much they gather from v.13. *Every  
 Vow, and every binding Oath to afflict the  
 Soul, her Husband may establish it, or her  
 Husband may make it void;* but it's more  
 probable, that the Vows, that might be  
 disannull'd by the Father or Husband,  
 might be Vows concerning giving away  
 a Sum of Money to Pious and chari-  
 table uses; the Father and the Husband  
 in these Cases, the Propriety of the Mo-  
 ney and Goods in the House being in  
 them, it was reasonable they should be  
 consulted with in things of this nature;  
 but if they heard of such Vows and did  
 not contradict them, they were to stand,  
 their silence importing consent, though it  
 may be said, that the persons here men-  
 tioned, whose Vows might be dispensed  
 with by their Parents, and Husbands,  
 might be persons under Age, not arrived  
 yet to the full use of their Reason, or ma-  
 ture Understanding, what a Vow meant;  
 and though the Jews tell us, that a Wo-  
 man might lawfully make a Vow at 11  
 years of age, and a young Man at 12, yet  
 we have no warrant for this belief in Scri-  
 pture,

*Hec sunt  
 vota que  
 ille irrita  
 reddere  
 potest, si  
 quid sit de  
 rebus in  
 quibus est  
 afflictio a-  
 nime e. g.  
 si que dix-  
 erit, si la-  
 vero me,  
 aut si non  
 lavero, si  
 ornavero  
 me, aut si  
 non orna-  
 vero, &c.  
 Vel si dix-  
 erit, Sunto  
 mihi munus  
 fructus  
 mandi vel  
 fructus hu-  
 bus regio-  
 nis, &c.*

pture, and few People are so ripe at that age, as to know or consider the Importance, End, Weight, Consequence, and Nature of so Solemn an Obligation.

3. And having thus explained to you, what necessary Rules are to be observ'd in making Religious Vows, the next thing I am to do, is to exhort you to a sober, holy, and moderate use of them, and you will not think the exhortation unreasonable, if you do but reflect;

1. *That this Religious Vowing will be a great Argument of your readiness to please God;* We look upon't as such in David; *I have Sworn, and will perform it, that I will keep thy Righteous Judgments,* Psal.

119. 106. It shew'd the great proneness of his Mind to prove, what was that good, and acceptable, and perfect Will of God. Readiness to please God is made in Scripture the indeleble Character of a Christian; and we are assured, that God judges of our Actions by this readiness, 2 Cor. 8. 11, 12. Where this readiness is not, Men serve God by force, and what they do in Religion, is more from fear of Judgment, than love to Gods Holiness; and such Services God respects not, because the Heart is cold. Vows are acts of Resolution, and there must be a great

*The Best Exercise.*

fence within, that draws these Promises forth. And what is this fence and Resolution but effects of the Souls readiness to express its esteem of Gods favours. He that Vows an act of Devotion, breaks through difficulties, and there is not a better sign, that the Heart is ready to please its great Owner, than when it can wade through hardships to do him service.

2. *These Religious Vows are signs of the Hearts sincerity.* Signs that we do not play at fast and loose with God, that our hatred against sin is not feigned, nor our anger counterfeit ; that we do not onely pretend willingness to part with our lusts, but have in sober sadness determined their destruction. Sincerity of Heart is so much insisted on by the Holy Ghost, that the most specious Acts of Worship are rejected as dung, while they come not attended with this qualification. By a Vow a man resolves to put a stop to sin, and shews that he will have no off's and on's, but intends to silence and hush the sinful desire for ever, and this is honest, done like a *Nathaniel*, an *Israelite indeed*, *in whom there is no guile*, John 1. 47.

3. *These Vows put us to some streights, and are therefore the better sign, that we enter*

*enter in at the straight Gate , and walk in the narrow Way that leads to Life.* A Man hath very great reason to suspect his Religion, which doth not put him to inconveniences, nor obliges him to any Self-denial. A Vow drives the Soul into a narrow path, and restrains her freedom, tyes her up to a Law, and by that Law, she must go, and dares not swerve , or deviate from it ; and yet it is a pleasing Bondage, and the Soul voluntarily yields to the yoak , to avoid being dissolute. 'Twas generously said of *David* to *Araunah*, 2 Sam. 24. 24. *I will not Offer Burnt-Offerings unto the Lord my God, of that which cost me nothing:* So must a Christian say, I will not walk in a way , but what hath some straitness in it ; and since these Vows do signally pinch Flesh and Blood , and confine it to boundaries , and limits, they yield this satisfaction, That we are in a likely way to be saved.

In a word ; By such Holy Vows we assure our hearts, that we do not take sin to be such a harmless thing, as the World makes of it, and that we have other apprehensions of Religion , than careless sinners have, and that we do in good earnest believe , that Gods word is of

great weight , and will be infallibly fulfill'd ; That we do not allow of Hypocrisie, nor think, that Devotion consists altogether in making clean the outside of the Cup, and Platter ; That we value the Examples of Saints more , than the Customs of the World, and are resolved to be guided more by the Actions of a few Mortified Men , than by the inconsiderate doings of a Multitude.

4. But then, if we enter into such Holy Vows, let's dread Violation of them, as we would do committing the blackest Villanies, which is the *Fourth Particular* I am to Treat of. And the breaking of them will appear very dreadful, if we reflect,

I. That this violation is no less than Perjury. A Vow , and an Oath, are much of the same Nature , and accordingly in *Scripture*, they are used promiscuously one for the other , Numb. 30. 13. For though it's said that a Vow is made onely to God, and an Oath many times both to God and Man , yet still in both God is made Witness, Judge, and Revenger : What some of the *Papists* say , in this case , that the *Pope* can Dispense with a Vow , and not with an Oath, is Childish , and unworthy of

a rational Mans disquisition. He can dispense with neither, and it's nothing but downright flattery in the *Canonists*, and *Decretalists*, to tell him, he can do either the one, or the other. Since God makes them to be one and the same thing, why should we invent distinctions, to make them different; and being the same, if we presume to violate a Vow we have made, we cannot possibly avoid the guilt of Perjury, a sin so great, that in its heinousness it goes beyond Adultery, and Murther; beyond Adultery, because, in this, the crime is immediately committed against our Neighbour, but in the breach of Vows it is immediately levelled against God's Nature: Beyond Murther; because in this, a command of the second Table is wilfully broken, but in Perjury, a Precept of the first, which, as it concerns God immediately, so it is of greater dignity, and consequence, not to mention, that in Perjury Men deny Gods Wisdom, Knowledge, and taking notice of their Monstrous sin: It's true, in all sins, the sinner is guilty of this degeneration, but in this more especially, because God is appealed to, as knowing the very secrets of the heart, which Faith is manifestly and desperatel-

ly denied in violation of such Vows, and turns the crime into Blasphemy,

*Vid. Sto-  
bæum,  
Serm. 28  
de perjurio.*

2. This violations of Vows is a thing, which the very Heathen have abhorred, the most Idolatrous people in the World have dreaded it, as one of the greatest Enormities Man can possibly be guilty of; which made one of them say merrily, That such Men as break their Vows, had need get themselves New Gods, for the old ones would never let so great a Crime pass unrevenged: They have Writ Books against it, Declaimed against it, and thought it rational, that persons who make so bold with the Almighty, should be banish'd from Humane Societies. They have detested such violations, as things contrary to the Instinct of Humane Nature, Doom'd such sinners to notorious Punishments, and left them to the All-revenging eye of Heaven.

3. And indeed, he that hath been no careless spectator, reader, or observer of affairs in the World, cannot be ignorant, how severely God hath in this life punished such Presumptuous Violations, Men that have dared to be so hellishly bold, have either come to some fearful end, or have suffered signally in their Estates,

or

or Fortune, or Reputation, or have fallen into strange Terrors, and Anguish of Conscience, or have been forced like *Cain* to be Vagabonds on Earth, and even then, when they have fled from one place to another, to hide their shame, Vengeance hath followed them, so dangerous a thing it is to play with a Consuming Fire.

My self have known persons, who, upon the breach of their Vows, have fallen into that disconsolate, dejected condition, that they have run into Despair, and have turn'd a Deaf Ear to all the Comforts of the Gospel. Something within hath fate heavy on their hearts, and in the midst of their health they have consumed, and pined away, and no Drugs of Apothecaries, no Medicines of Physicians, no Kind Addresses of their Friends, have been able to bring their Minds to any Calmness, or Serenity, but they have roll'd on from one Pensive Thought to another, till at last they have been ready to lay Violent Hands upon themselves, and, like *Judas*, toss'd from one place to another, have not been able to exchange their pain with their place.

4. This Violation of our Vow is a kind

*The Best Exercise.*

kind of Challenging God's Vengeance. It looks, as if we dared the Almighty, defied his Thunder, and mocked his Arm of Justice; for when we make a Vow, we do as good as desire God to revenge our Violation, if we break it, and therefore to break it wilfully, must needs participate of contempt, and undervaluing of his Vengeance, as if he either durst not, or could not punish it; or had so little regard to his Honour, and Justice, as to let such Enormities go scot-free: Such Sins, if truly interpreted, will look very big, and if the consequences of them be consider'd, it will be found, that they intrench strangely upon God's Honour, and Prerogative. This makes Men generally so afraid of breaking their Vows, that they even venture to keep rash, and inconsiderate Vows, because they think it safer to keep them, than by violation to put such notorious Affronts upon him that dwelleth in the Heavens. And this was it that Solomon aim'd at, Eccles. 5. 4. *When thou Vowest a Vow unto God, defer not to pay it, for he hath no pleasure in Fools; Pay that which thou hast Vowed: Better it is that thou shouldest not Vow, than that thou shouldest Vow and not pay.*

Such

Such men, as do not pay, are Fools indeed, for they seek to put a Cheat upon the Almighty, and to deceive him, whose Eyes are like Flames of Fire , and behold both the inside and outside of their hearts. Silly Wretches! as if a Grashopper could circumvent a Giant, or a poor Worm outwit the greatest Sages. Such Follies meet with Judgments of the same Nature, and as such Sinners mock the Most High, so he also will *Laugh at their Calamity, and Mock when their Fear comes*, Prov. i.

26.

5. If we break the Vows we make to God, What Man can trust us after that? If we are Treacherous to our God, how should we keep Faith with Men ? If we are unfaithful in greater Matters , Who Naucler. will commit lesser to our trusl ? When lib. 2. Ge-  
n. 11. Constantius, Constantines Father , had given order , That such Christians , as would not Sacrifice to the Heathen gods, should depart his Court , but those that would Offer Incense to Idols might stay ; and not a few, for fear of *losing* their Places, hereupon Offer'd Incense, while others quitted all they had, rather than they would sin against God ; He generously called those back, who had laid down their Employments upon the account of Conscience,

science, and chose them for his Friends, and Banished the other, that had consented to his Unjust Decree, saying, *That Men, who were not true to their God, could never be true to their Prince:* And the same may be said of these Violations of Solemn Promises, made to the Almighty; Men that can deal so unworthily with him, How should they deal honestly with their Neighbours? So that in breaking our Vows, we Cancel that Obligation, which must make us honest in our Dealings, and should all Men do so, Humane Societies would soon come to an end, and all things drop into disorder, and confusion.

6. How can God believe us, after such violations of our Vows, in case afterward we come to stand in need of his help, and to move him to pity, fall a Promising again? How justly may God Answer, as he did the *Israelites*, in a case much like it, *Go and cry to the Gods, whom you have serv'd, for I will deliver you no more*, Jud. 10. 13, 14. How justly may God reply, upon this occasion, You shall Cheat me, you shall Cozen me, you shall Impose upon me no more. How should I believe your Promises now, that have falsified your Word already;

ready? This many a man hath found, and having basely violated his Vows, when afterwards he hath come to lie upon his Death-Bed, and cryed out for Mercy, God hath stopt his Ears, and said, *When you stretch forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes and when you make many Prayers, I will not hear you, for your hands are full of Blood*, as he said to the Jews, Isai. 1.

15.

It is said of Esau, Heb. 12. 17. *That he sought the Inheritance of his Brothers Blessing carefully with Tears, but found no place of Repentance*, i. e. With all his Tears and Prayers, he could not make his Aged Father undo, what he had done, or take away the Blessing from him, to whom he had already imparted it: and truly, after such violations of our Vows, we have reason to fear, that God will deny us that Grace we beg for in the time of our Extremity, or that we shall be given up to a Hard Heart, and Reprobate Mind, for making so light of Gods Purity and Holiness; we may justly fear, that God will not set much by our Prayers and Supplications, when we come to stand in need of his Gracious Looks, and Influences.

I

I could add here, that a person that breaks his Vows, or makes no Conscience of keeping them, knows not where he shall stop in Sin, for no Sin after this can come amiss to him, he is prepared for every Evil Work, for Murther, Adultery, Deceit, and all other Wickedness; and is now ready to do any thing the Devil bids him. But, what hath been said shall suffice. I conclude this Point with St. Austin's words, in his Epistle to Paulinus: *Having once Vow'd, thou art no more thine own Master, and thou darest not do otherwise; if thou do not what thou hast Promised, thou art infinitely worse, than thou wert, before thou didst Vow. Thou hadst not then been worse, but onely less holy, but if thou break'st thy Word with God, thou art more wretched, and miserable; and therefore how much happier wilt thou be, if thou performest it.*

## II. Extraordinary Exercise.

*Fasting*, An Exercise commanded, and recommended, *Joel 2. 15. Mat. 6. 16, 17, 18, 19. Luke 2. 37. Acts 13. 2. 1 Cor. 7. 5.* By *Fasting*, I mean, either a Total Abstinence from Meat and Drink, or where Nature is not able to bear it, and Abstinence from all pleasant Food,

or

or Palatable Meat and Drink, for both these fall under the notion of *Fasting*, as we see, *Jon. 3. 5, 7. Dan. 10. 3.* And the end of this Abstinence must be Sequestring our Thoughts from the World, or dedicating our selves to God, which makes it a Religious Fast, and a Fast that God hath chosen, and an Exercise unto Godliness; without this qualification, *Fasting* comes not within the compass of Religious Exercises; and he that Fasts to cure a Surfeit, or to get himself a better Stomach, or because the Physician, and his Constitution requires it, doth God no Service by it, but only gratifies himself.

Fasts are commonly distinguished in-  
*Jon. 3. 6, 7.*  
to Publick and Private, and as the Pub-  
Episcopi  
lick are Commanded, and Ordered, ei-  
nniverse  
ther by the Civil Magistrate or the Go-  
plebi man-  
vernours of the Church, either to prevent  
dare jeju-  
Tertul.  
a Publick Judgment, or to remove it, if  
nia assolent  
it be already come; or to keep up the  
adv. Pfy-  
Memory of some dreadful Calamity,  
chic. c. 13.  
that hath formerly oppressed a People,  
so a Private is Instituted and Managed,  
either by Masters of Families, or by pri-  
vate Christians, to quicken themselves  
in Duty: And these private Fasts are  
the things that I shall chiefly press and  
insist

insist upon, not but that a Christian is obliged cheerfully to embrace the Opportunity of Publick Humiliations, but they being order'd but seldom, his Religious Concerns lay a Necessity upon him to use this Exercise more frequently in the place where he dwells, or sojourns.

Nor is this a New Exercise, we charge upon you, but such a one, as the Church of God hath, in all Ages, made use of to obtain God's Favour, and the Light of his Countenance. The *Jewish Church*, after that *Moses* had led the way in Fasting Forty days, and Forty nights, soon learn'd to keep days of Abstinence upon the Account of Devotion. Indeed, God himself shew'd them the necessity of this Exercise, when *Levit. 16. 29.* he gave them order to Afflict their Souls, *i. e.* to Fast on the Tenth day of the Seventh Month, or *September*, by a Statute for ever. This was the Great Day of Expiation; and they not onely abstained from Meat, Drink, Ornaments, Curious Dresses, and all manner of Pleasures, but went Bare-foot, confessed their Sins, bewailed them, and cry'd mightily unto God, to be Merciful to them for His Names sake, or for the *Messias* sake, who

who was to come, and expiate their Sins by his own Blood.

But here they did not rest; and God having once acquainted them, that he was delighted with such Humiliations, and Abasements, if rightly managed, they began now to make use of them upon all occasions, when any Signal Calamity Invaded the Land, as appears from the *Proclamation* of King *Jehoshaphat*, 2 Chron. 20. 3. and by what *Esther* did, by the advice of *Mordecai*, *Esther* 4. 16. and we may suppose, private Men, when any Pressures, or Miseries threatned them, did the like. Not long after, when God thought fit to pour out his Wrath upon *Jerusalem*, and the Inhabitants thereof, and the goodly Temple was destroy'd, and burnt down to the ground, the *Jews* thought themselves obliged to make more frequent use of this Exercise, and accordingly they Instituted Four Solemn Anniversary Fasts. The *First* they appointed to be in the Fourth Month, or in *June*, in memory of the Breach made in the Wall of the City of *Jerusalem* by the *Chaldean* Army, *Jer.* 52. 2. The *Second* in the Fifth Month, or in *July*, in memory of the Burning of the *Temple*, and of the

whole City of *Jerusalem*, *Jer. 52. 13.* The *Third* in the Seventh Month, or *September*, in memory of the Murther'd *Gedaliah*, upon whose Death follow'd the *DISPERSION* of the *Jews*, *Jer. 41. 1, 2.* The *Fourt*h in *December*, or the *Tenth* Month, in Memory of *Nabuchadnezzar's* besieging the City of *Jerusalem*, *2 Kings 25. 1.* And these yearly Fasts they did punctually observe, not onely in their First Captivity, or Exile, but after that *Cyrus* had given them leave to return into their own Country, even unto the time of *Darius Hystaspes*. And two of these Fasts the Prophet *Zachary* takes particular notice of, as most remarkable, *viz.* that of the Fifth and *Seventh Month*, *Zach. 7. 5.*

This Devotion, as Men among the *Jews* began to separate themselves from their Neighbours into Societies, and Orders, and undertook to lead a stricter life than the Croud, so it increased signally, and Fasting became a Characteristick Note of Men, eminently Religious, which makes the *Pharisee* afterwards, *Luke 18. 12.* say, *That he Fasted twice in the Week*, i. e. *Mundays*, and *Thursdays*, because that on the Fifth day of the week *Moses* ascended to the Mount of God, and on  
the

the Second he returned from thence, a Custom which the Son of God doth not mislike, though it was a voluntary Institution, but finds fault onely with their insisting on these outward observations, while they neglected the greater Works of *Charity*.

The *Christians* having learn'd this piece of Devotion among the *Jews*, soon improved it, and because they would not be outdone by the *Pharisees* in Fasting, resolved to Fast two days in the week as well as they, but changed the days, and pitch'd upon Wednesdays and Frydays, because that on Wednesday the *Jews* took Counsel together, how to Murther *Christ*, and on Fryday, the Saviour of the World died. And these two standing Fasts the *Christians* in *Tertullian's* time used to call *Stations*, because they went to Church on those days, and stay'd there till the Ninth hour, or Three of the Clock in the Afternoon, and some, 49. as *Montanus* his Disciples, till Night, which makes *Tertullian*, when he became a *Montanist*, call the Fasts of those, that Fasted onely till Three of the Clock, *Stationem semijejunia*, half Fasts, or half Stations; and though the word *Station* seems to import standing, yet

Vid. *Ignat.*  
*Clem. Alex.*  
*Tertull.* &  
*Albaspi. Ob-*  
*servat. lib.*  
*I.C. 47,48,*

they

they did not so much stand in Prayer on those days , as lie prostrate upon the ground ; and because they spent those days in Mourning, and Confessing their Sins, they call'd them Stations , from the the Toil and Hardship of Souldiers, which stand Centry in Cold and Frosty Nights, and undergo the various storms of Wind and Weather.

And indeed, about this time, the Discipline of Fasting became so rigorous, that Men brake into *Schisms*, and divided from the Church, not about Points of Doctrine, as they do now , but about strictness of Life, and vied one with the other in Fasting and Abstinence ; and I am apt to believe, that while these disputes about Fasting were very hot , that the Christians here, and there might begin to bethink themselves of an imitation of Christ's Fast, and began to practise the Quadragesimal or Lent-Fast , for being jeer'd by

*Tertull. de Montanus* his Disciples, that they fasted  
*Feijan. c. 1.* onely forty hours , i. e. on *Good Fryday*  
 2. and the Saturday before *Easter* , during  
 the time that the Bridegroom was taken away from them , and continued in the Grave, they unwilling to be outdone by *Schismatics* , might think of enlarging their days of Abstinence, and by

by degrees from two days came to four, *Cassian.*  
from four to six, from six to fourteen, *collat. 21.*  
and from fourteen to forty; for, as in *c. 30. &*  
*St. Austin's Judgment,* the Apostles *August. Ep.*  
left no certain Rules for Fasting-days, *85 ad Ca-*  
*ster.* *falsum.*

so it seems more than probable from  
*Irenæus* his Testimony in *Eusebius*, *Euseb. Hist.*  
that before this time, the Christians, some *Ecccl. l. s.*  
fasted but one, some two, some more  
days, some forty hours onely before *Ea-*  
*ster.* *c. 23.*

What we read of the Fastes of Christians in the following Centuries, especially the Third, Fourth, and Fifth, is very stupendous, for St. *Basil*, St. *Jerom*, and *Basil. E-*  
St. *Austin* assure us, that not a few Chri- *pist. ad E-*  
stians in those days would fast three days *pisc. Sebas.*  
together, and neither eat, nor drink any *Hieron.*  
thing, till the third day at night; not to *vit. Pauli*  
eat or drink at all, or to fast every day *c. 5.*  
till night was a very common thing then, *August. de*  
and no man counted that Abstinence any *morib. Ec-*  
great matter. Of *Hilarion* saith St. *Je-*  
*rom*, that from the one and twentieth to *clis. Hit-*  
the seven and twentieth year of his Age, *ron. de vit.*  
he lived for three years upon a sort of *Hilarion.*  
Pulse called Lentiles soften'd onely in cold *c. 6.*  
water, and the three other years upon  
dry Bread, and Salt, and Water, from  
seven and twenty to thirty he sustaine'd

himself onely with Herbs, and raw Roots, that grew wild in the Field, from 30 to 35 his Dyet was a little Barley Bread, and Colworts, without any Sauce; but finding his Eye-sight decay upon that Self-denial, he added Oyl by way of Sauce to his Herbs, and so run on in his Race till he was 63, tasting of neither Apples, nor Pulse, nor any other thing; from 63 to 83 his Diet was no more but Sops made of Meal, and Herbs; and yet as slender as this Diet was, he never eate till Sun-set. Thus far St. *Jerom*, and he protests, and appeals to *Jesus*, and his Holy Angels, as witnesses of the truth of what he saith, that about *Syria* he hath seen persons, of whom one having shut himself up in a Cave for thirty years together, lived upon nothing but Barley-Bread and muddy Water, and another in another Cottage made his Meal a days of nothing else but five dry Figs.

*Hitron.  
vit. Pauli  
c. 5.*

To that height of maceration, and crucifying of the Flesh, did Fasting come in those Ages; and though I am not bound to believe all that Antiquity hath written about the miraculous Fastes of Men, how *Ammonius* did never eate any thing, that was boyled, or baked, or roasted, how *Conon* for thirty years together did eate

eate but once a week , how *Eusebius* liv'd upon fifteen dry Figs forty days , how one *John* was supported without Food ten years, how *Maria Aegyptica* had nothing to Feed upon for seventeen years together ; but three Loaves of Bread , how *Pityrion* did eate but twice a week, how *Polycronius* hath been known to fast seven days together, how *Posidonius* eate no Bread in forty years, &c. Though I say, I am not bound to believe all these, and such-like passages, Antiquity hath left upon Record, yet without controversie, the Abstinence of men in those times was wondrous great, voluntary Abstinence I mean, for nothing put them upon it but Religion, and a desire of a more endearing converse with the Father of Lights, with whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning.

And though it would be in vain , and next to ridiculous to desire any of my Readers to tread in the steps of these Gyants in Fasting, yet I must with very great seriousness, exhort *you*, that are not ashamed of being Christians, to make Religious Abstinence your more frequent Exercise ; and to this purpose it will be convenient to speak something of the time, and occasion, when this Exer-

cise is most proper ; 2. how it must be managed ; and, 3. what it is, that makes it necessary.

1. Of the time and occasion, when this Exercise may be most proper, and here the best Rule to go by is the Scripture, and the Examples of Saints, and these will inform us, that it is proper at any time, and the oftner the better, but particularly,

¶ 1. *When we lie under some Temporal Afflictions*, whether the Affliction consist in losses, or in the malice, hatred, or ill-will of Men, or in some other crosses and disappointments, that may befall us in this World. In such cases *David* ever had recourse to this Exercise, as we see, *Psal. 69. 10, 11.* and acknowledged the justice of God, confessed God did him no wrong in suffering such troubles to seize upon him, pray'd for mitigation of his misery, or for deliverance, and he fasted on purpose that his Prayers might be more piercing. The same thing he did when his Child lay sick, *2 Sam. 12. 16.* *He besought God for the Child, and fasted, and lay all night upon the Earth :* Fasting is an acknowledgement of our vileness, and he that abstains from Meat and Drink upon a Religious account, confesses that he

he hath deserved to be starved to death ; and it is natural for mankind to believe, that such humiliations and abasements are prevalent with the Deity.

II. *When any of our Friends, or Relations, or Neighbours fall into more than ordinary trouble,* our compassion and tendernels to their disconsolate estate is best expressed by fasting and supplications, and in this also *David's example is remarkable*, who went so far in his Charity, as to fast even for seeming friends, but real enemies, *Psal. 35. 13. But as for me, when they were sick, my cloathing was Sackcloth; I humbled my Soul with Fasting, and my Prayer returned into my own Bosom*, i. e. was answered, and heard, and they were deliver'd. Selfishness hath so prevailed in the age, we live in, that we think it scarce worth the trouble of a Fast, to procure Gods mercy for our selves, much less for others. Good Lord ! What an unbelieving World is this ! Men believe not that God will work any mighty work upon their fasting, and therefore slight it. Heretofore men believed it, and saw wonders, and God blessed them, and was entreated not onely for them, but for their Neighbours and Relations too.

III. *When we would be rid of any inordinate Lust or Affection.* Fasting in these cases weakning the Body, weakens such Lusts, and Affections too, which have too great dependance upon the Body, and are more vigorous, as the Body is pamper'd, and gratified, and what Christ says of that evil spirit, *Mat. 17.21.* may be most truly applied to such Lusts, *This kind goes not out but by Fasting and Prayer.* These Lusts are certainly enemies to our Souls, for they war against them in St. Peter's Phrase, *1 Pet. 2. 11.* and as a General that means to take a strong Town, cuts off their Provision, and will not suffer any Corn or other Commodities to be carried thither, whence it comes to pass, that the enemy must necessarily at last yield himself, so inordinate Lusts must be starved out, and if you bring a famine upon them, you take away their strength, and deprive them of their courage, and briskness, said Moses in *Ruffinus*, for what is stronger than a Lion, yet let him want his Food, and he becomes as weak as the feeblest Animal.

*Ruffus lib.  
3. devit.  
Monach.  
scit. 66.*

IV. *When we stand in need of Grace, or of some Virtuous Habit, or of Conquest of some particular Temptation.* In this case

case Abstinence is exceeding profitable, not that our empty stomachs do in their own nature contribute towards it, but the Abstinence fits us for seriousness, that seriousness for earnestness, that earnestness for Gods favour. And therefore it was that the Angel told *Daniel*, Dan. 10. 12. *From the first day, that thou didst set thy heart to understand, and to chasten thy self before thy God, thy words were heard,* to shew that fasting fits the Soul for fervent Prayer, and God denies nothing to such intercessions, Jam. 5. 16. and indeed where men can so esteem the Grace of God, as to take pains for it, Gods arms are ever open to them, for what the Heathens observed long ago, holds true still, *To the industrious God Dii omnia denies nothing.* Nothing discovers our esteem of a thing, so much as our contentedness to undergo some hardship for it, and while we deny our Bodies often the satisfaction they crave, they learn by degrees to be more obedient to Faith and Reason, and consequently are less impediments to those Graces which require a Soul, that can live above sense, and sublunary objects. Hence *David* to learn contentedness in adversity, though exceeding dry, yet would not drink the water

*Laboribus  
vendant.*

water that his *Grandees* fetcht for him from the Well of *Bethlehem*, *2 Sam. 23. 16.* and in imitation of him, some in the Primitive Church to learn cheerfulness in want, when they have almost longed for a certain sort of Food, and have got it, yet have been unwilling to taste of it, though their appetite was eager after it, and for this very reason I think it was, that the *Pythagoreans* used to sit down at a Table full of the greatest dainties and varieties, and with coming stomachs too, and in the midst of their hunger and greediness after Meat, rise from Table, and forbear eating, or cause all to be taken away, and continue fasting, and all to learn self-conquest, and to get their Souls more raised above the World.

V. *When we undertake any great Work or Office, it's very fit to consecrate it with a Fast.* So *Christ* enter'd upon his Office of Prophet with Fasting, *Mat. 4. 1, 2.* and St. *Paul* and *Barnabas*, when ordain'd to be Preachers of the Word, began that tremendous Work with Fasting, and Prayer, *Acts 13. 3.* a thing so decent, that the very Heathens have seen the necessity of it, which was the reason why those that were going to consult the Oracle, were obliged to fast, and those that

*Vid. Dio-  
dor. Secul.  
in Menag.  
Not. ad  
Diog.  
Laert. lib.  
24*

that were to be admitted to Sacrifice or Minister to the *Ægyptian Isis* were commanded to fast ten days, and those that were to be Priests of *Jupiter* were ordered to abstain from all Flesh, and things, that were heated by fire, and they among the *Indian Philosophers*, that were initiated into the Service or Worship of the Sun, durst drink neither Wine, nor eat any Flesh, and *Amphiaraus* laid it down as a Rule, that those that came to receive and give the true, and clear meaning of the Oracles, must debar themselves of all Food one whole day, and three days be-<sup>Vid. Vol. terran. lib. 13. c. 55.</sup> fides of Wine.

VI. When the Church of God is groaning under persecution, or some other grievous oppression. This obliged the man of desires the Prophet *Daniel* to retire frequently, seeing the Temple and City of *Jerusalem* lie desolate, and in rubbish, he fasted often, deprecating Gods Wrath, and indignation against his People, *Dan. 10. 3.* and on the same account St. *Cyprian* applied himself to this Exercise, when the <sup>Vid. Cypri. an Epist. 8.</sup> Church was grievously afflicted by the <sup>15.</sup> Pagans, and good reason, that he, who is a Member of the Church, should make the Churches concern, his own, and burn as it were, when that burns, and be weak when

when that is weak, and be afflicted when that is afflicted. So much the relation, every private Christian hath to that mystical Body doth import, without which he is no Member, but an excrement of that body, as Warts, and Wens are in Bodies natural, deformities rather than ornaments, and which merit resection more, than conservation.

VII. *When a Sinner first turns from his evil ways :* Nothing can beautifie his Soul more than this Abstinence, whereby he confesses his demerit, that God might justly take away his Holy Spirit for ever from him, the true Food of his Soul, and that which must preserve him unto Salvation. So much the Prophet *Joel* intimates, when he bids such men, as in good earnest turn to God, make fasting part of that mortification, *Joel* 2. 12. Turning to God is giving what demonstration we can of the sincerity of our repentance, and hatred of sin, and abhorrency of our selves. So that fasting being part of that demonstration, it must not be left out. *Ahab* himself, though a notorious Hypocrite, yet was sensible that there could be no turning to God, without this Exereise, which made him when he heard the Words of *Elijah*, apply himself

self to repentance , and to give some demonstrations of its being extraordinary, and as he thought sincere, *He rent his Cloaths, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly,* **I Kings 21. 27.**

VIII. *Where a man hath been guilty of some notorious Sin , as Murder , Adultery, Fornication , Oppression , Blasphemy , Atheism, &c. and repents, it's fit he should keep a Fast now and then , to represent unto himself the dreadfulness of his Sin, and the infinite patience of God , and what a mercy it is that God hath turned him from darkness unto light , and from the power of Satan unto God. Such sins eat deep into the Soul, and they had need be remembred often , and our detestation of them had need be expressed frequently by holy Abstinence ; They are enough to damp all hopes of comfort, enough to deprive us of Gods Presence by Grace, and of his Presence by Glory. They are sins, that let in all the Host of Hell, and the Soul must fall very low , before the Devil can have such mastery over her. The horrour of such sins requires frequent compunctions , frequent compunctions are caused by frequent Abstinence , and that makes fasting necessary on such occasions.*

sions. In all probability David's Fasts were more frequent than ordinary after his commission of Murder and Adultery, and when we hear him complain, *My knees are weak through fasting*, Psal. 109. 24. and *I wept and chastened my Soul with fasting*, Psal. 69. 10. We may justly conclude, that these Exercises had relation to the sins, we have mention'd.

2. And having said so much of the time, when this Exercise may be most proper, I must in the next place let you see, how it must be managed.

And, 1. As I said in the beginning, *In such Fasts there must be a forbearing of all Meat and Drink*. To forbear Flesh, and to eate Fish is no Fast at all, for this is but changing one delicacy for another, and the same may be said of Wine and Sweetmeats, which the Papists make use of in their Fasts, while they will taste no Broath, no Eggs, nor any thing, that hath relation to Flesh. These at the best are Mock-fasts, and are so far from serving to elevate the mind, that the fumes of such dainties oppress it as much, as flesh will do. The ancient Christians indeed used their *ενεργασίαι*, sometimes in their Fasts, especially in the week before *Easter*, which consisted in eating

eating those things which had little or no juice in them , but that was but just to support nature from fainting , there being little nourishment in them, and in imitation of those Christians a man may in his Fasts make use of Bread, and Water, or Small-beer , if Nature will bear no emptiness , and yet may be truly said to Fast , because it is an Abstinence from all pleasant Food ; but to fast in Wine and Fish is to play the *Epicure*, not the *Hermit*.

2. *These Fasts must not be broke till the evening.* The Grecians and Coptite Christians at this day seldom extend their Fasts beyond three or four of the Clock in the Afternoon, and usually break them, when Evening Prayer is ended , and though the Primitive Christians used to do so on their weekly Fasts , i. e. on Wednesdays and Fridays, yet in other Fasts they protracted and prolonged them even to Sun-set, and some to a much longer time , as I shew'd before. Those that did heretofore fast onely till three of the clock in the Afternoon, it's like might take that custom from *Cornelius*, Acts 10. 30. who seems to say that he was fasting till the ninth hour, which is the time, we speak of , though others think that he

fasted four days together ; But the usual measure of such Abstinence is the evening, or when the Artificial day is at an end.

3. In such Fasts our particular sins, and neglects must be thought upon, confessed, lamented, aggravated, and deplored ; for such days are true humiliation days, and nothing is like to make us so humble as the consideration of our offences, and demerits, and the wrath of God, which is due to us thereupon ; sin, if seriously viewed in all its consequences, will certainly appear very dreadful, odious, and intolerable, and will shew us what monstrous Creatures we are, and that's enough to humble us even into hatred of our selves, and accordingly this was the custom of old, *Neb. 9. 1, 16, 17. Dan. 9. 3, 4, 5.* and that's the reason why such Fasts are sometimes expressed by mourning, and weeping only, because mourning for sin, which hath provoked the Almighty must be one principal part in this Exercise, *Zach. 7. 3.*

4. In such Fasts deprecations must be made for the Nation we live in, and indeed for all Mankind ; for such humiliations must infuse tenderness, and compassion into us, if they do not, they are not of the right stamp ; If I am truly sensible of mine own

own sins, I cannot but pity my Neighbours, my Relations, my Acquaintance, and other men, who are involv'd in the same misery, and are as liable to the anger of God, as my self, and if I have any pity, any compassion for my self, I cannot but have pity for others too, but how doth my pity shew it self, but by becoming an intercessor for them, as well as for my self; and though I am the principal person, that want mercy on such occasions, yet my fellow-Christians must not be left out, except I can see men drowning without being concern'd, whether they have a deliverer, or no.

5. In such Fasts, the Word of God must be diligently read, and read with great attention; especially such portions of Scripture, as contain some of the severest threatenings of God, and his Commands, which we have been most negligent of, and upon such passages reflections must be made, and those Threatenings and Commands applied to our selves, and our hearts asked, how they feel themselves under these comminations, and whether they are sensible of their Errours; as the Eunuch of the Queen of *Aethiopia* said to *Philip*, *Of whom doth the Prophet speak of himself, or of another man?* *Acts 8. 34.*

## The Best Exercise.

so when these threatenings occur, the interrogation must be; Of whom doth God speak, of me or of another? Am not I guilty of the same sin, and may not I justly think, he speaks of me, as well as of another?

6. *With these Devotions in such Fasts praises of God may be mingled now and then*, and Gods various Blessings laid open to our view, that we may learn to admire his Goodness, and our strange ingratitude, and in this the *Israelites* in *Nehemia*, are our Precedents, of whose Fast we read, that they divided the day of their Fast into four parts, one part they consecrated to confessions of Sin, the second to reading the Word of God, the third to thanksgiving and praising God, the fourth it's like to begging Blessings Spiritual and Temporal for themselves, and for their brethren, *Nebem*.

9. 1, 2, 3. An excellent pattern, and which, if follow'd may keep us from being tired with devotion on such occasions.

7. *In such Fasts, holy, serious, and gracious thoughts are absolutely necessary*; thoughts suitable to that mortification, and the great concern we are about; for as we need not lie upon our faces all day

day, but may lawfully rise sometimes, and walk, so in that walk, or while we are not reading, or praying, our minds must be busie with contemplations of our spiritual wants, and the ways and means how they may be supplied, our eyes must be fixed upon Heaven, and God's Justice, and Vengeance survey'd with an impartial eye, till it makes us wish with Jeremy, *O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the iniquities of my sins!* Jer. 9. 1.

8. *Alms and Works of Charity must accompany such Fasts;* for thus we are taught, *Isai. 58. 6, 7. Is not this the Fast that I have chosen? To undo the heavy, Burdens, to deal thy Bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the Poor, that are cast out, to thy house?* In such Fasts we come to beg a considerable Alms of God, and God is resolv'd to observe his own Rule, *With what measure you mete, with the same it shall be measured to you again,* Luk. 6. 38. *and that the merciful shall obtain mercy.* What pity can we expect from God at such times, while we shut up our bowels of compassion to the needy? Though we our selves fast, yet that's no Rule for them that are in distreſs, and want daily

Food, and we then fast with some comfort, while we make them eate, that are destitute of necessaries, and conveniences.

<sup>1 Kings</sup>  
<sup>21. 9.</sup>

9. *In such Fasts we must have no ill designs.* He that with Jezebel fasts to circumvent an innocent Naboth, fasts not to God, but to the Devil, and he who hath some interest, or intrigue to carry on, and can effect it by nothing so easily as by a Fast and Humiliation, to bring people into a good opinion of him, takes strange pains to make God his implacable enemy. To provoke God by downright works of darkness is all, one would think, that wickedness can aim at; but to convert Religion into sin, and by a Fast to hold a Candle to the Devil, is a Villany, which hath no name, and therefore the punishment due to it, can have no bounds, no measure. He that Fasts upon the account of the great injustice, and oppression he hath been guilty of, in hopes, that God will let him enjoy the estate or means, he hath wrongfully gotten, without restitution, observes a lesser Command, and breaks a greater. The design in such Fasts must be no other but to cloath our Souls with greater Righteousness, and to get our hearts fill'd with greater

ter zeal to Gods Glory. To think that a Fast will excuse my sin , or Abstinence serve for a cloak to cover my unlawful desires , or make my Lusts , and wilful Follies, pass for Peccadillo's in Heaven, are thoughts, which require no other confutation, but God's thunder ; and where people can think so ill of God, and Religion, there is no other way to convince them, but by *Viols of wrath , and cups of trembling and astonishment.*

10. In these Fasts new Resolutions must be made , against those sins , we find our selves very prone, and inclined to ; without this,our Fasts are but cold services, and our Abstinence but a formality. It's therefore well observed by the Jewish Doctors, that it is not said of the Ninevites, that God saw their Fasting and their Sackcloth, but c.2. fol. 1. מִתְפָּנֶיךָ their Works, and that they turned from their evil ways. Without such Resolutions, we only fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness, as it is said, *Isai. 58. 4.* but do not fast to God. If we have been defective in any duty, new resolutions must be made against the neglect, new resolutions to be more careful in the performance , new resolutions to watch more, and to overcome our selves. This is to renew our Covenant with God,

vid.

and when we do so, God will be found of us, 2 Chron. 15. 12, 15. To weaken our Bodies in fasting, while our sins continue vigorous and strong, is only a seeming imitation of a Nation, that doth righteousness, and forsakes not the Ordinances of God, but no real following after Righteousness, as God complains of the Jews, Isai. 58. 2.

11. Our intent in such Fasts must be to fit our selves for the influences of God's Spirit. One great reason why the Christians of old had so plentiful a Portion of God's Spirit vouchsafed to them, was without doubt their great Temperance, and Abstinence, which makes the Soul more agile, and lively, and consequently quickens her understanding, and prepares her for those communications of the Deity. I can lay no very great stress upon the place, because it concerns a particular person, yet it is remarkable however, that the Evangelist speaking of St. John the Baptist's Abstinence, immediately subjoyns the priviledge, we speak of, Luke 1. 15. *He shall be great in the fight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink, and be shall be filled with the Holy Ghost,* as if Abstinence attracted that invisible influence, and

and God loved to converse more with persons that are enemies to pampering of their Bodies, than with those, that delight in corporal Food, and choicer Diet. Indeed the more the Body is cherished, the more sleepy will the Soul be, and the less it is cocker'd, and pleased, the more active will the Spirit be; and I think I may lay it down for a Maxime, that the greatest Revelations, and Inspirations have been vouchsafed to Men that have been most given to Abstinence. Of *Anna* the Prophetess it is particularly said, that she *served God with fasting much*, Luke 2. 37. Not that I would encourage men to aim at extraordinary Visions and Revelations in their Fasts, but so much I dare promise them, that by frequent Religious Fasts, they may obtain great assistances of God's Spirit, to subdue their Corruptions, and to do great things for God, and to arrive to more than ordinary content, and satisfaction. And this calls me to another observation,

12. *That these Fasts, if the Soul shall receive any great good by them, as I hinted before, must be frequent.* Once a year, or once in half a year to deny our selves in Meat,

Meat, and Drink, upon the account of devotion, is may be, to do more, than profane persons, but not to do more than hypocrites ; it is the frequency of study, makes men Scholars, and the frequency of speaking makes men masters of a Language. Frequent touching of the Strings makes a man a good Lutenist, as frequent working at a Trade, makes a man an excellent Artificer , so he that repeats this Exercise often, will not only get a facility in the performance, but his Soul will finally thrive by it, supposing still that the days be spent, as I have directed ; and though we cannot lay down a certain rule for all men, because their Constitutions and employments are different ; yet I should think, that once a month at least any private Christian might keep a solemn Fast to obtain mercy, and find Grace to help in the time of need. Those who have more time, may take the first Christians for their pattern, and exercise themselves either once , or twice a week in such Abstinence. The Scripture hath not given us any particular instructions about it, because God would have such Exercises come freely from us without constraint, and then they become *Golden Viols full of odours*, as St. John speaks, Rev.

13. When we fast thus, our care must be not to despise others, that do not. Every man stands, and falls to his own Master, and I that know not anothers Reasons, why he neglects such Exercises, must not therefore judge him, as profane. I must still consider, that I have more need of such Self-denials, than other men, and though they do not for the present apply themselves to these stricter Rules of living, God will in time acquaint them with their duty. I know my own wants and necessities best, and my first care must be to save mine own Soul. As other mens neglects must be no examples to me, so neither if they do not do, what I do must I cry, *Stand off, for I am holier than thou art.* This may befit a Pharisee, but doth not become a Christian, and whatever effects Grace produces in the Soul, to be sure contempt of others is no Fruit of that Tree.

14. Those that are under the yoak, as Servants, or Apprentices, and are desirous of this Exercise, must take such days, as their Masters, and Superiours will allow, or when they can be best spared from their work and employment, and if it be replied, that they have no other days, but Sundays and Holidays, I answer

answer that there's no place of Scripture that forbids turning the Lords Day, or other Festivals, in case of necessity into days of hnmiliation, especially, where the severity of Masters, and Mistresses is such , that they will neither enter into Gods Kingdom themselves, nor suffer those, that will, to enter. The *Eastern* Church heretofore made it a crime to fast on Saturday , or on the Sabbath day , except the great Saturday before *Easter*, yet the *Western* Church ventured it ; and what was a Festival in the East, was a Humiliation day in the West, and no doubt they had their different reasons for it,as the *Eastern* Church, made it a Festival to oppose the Heresie of *Marcion* , who fasted that day ; so the *Western* made it a day of Humiliation, because the Disciples of our Lord were overwhelmed with grief and sorrow that day , for the loss of their Master.

This passage I mention on purpose to shew, that though the Lords day , and other Holidays be Festivals , yet it hath not been unusual to change Festivals into fasting-days, and consequently a person that is under such Bondage, may no doubt lawfully spend them in such mortifying

Vid. Ca-  
non. Apo-  
stol. 55.

*Εἰ τοις αὐτα-  
καντὶ οὐδεί-  
βατον γενέσου-  
ει τὸν ἡ-  
ρόν οὐδεί-  
βατον τοῦ  
πάτρα, εἰ-  
το γένεση  
γενέσει.*

Auth. E-  
pist. ad  
Philiipp.  
Ignatio  
adscriptio.

tifying Exercises, because he hath no other days to employ in such Devotions.

15. *They that are Masters of their time, and have liberty to choose what days they think fit for this Exercise, may do well to pitch on such days, when together with their private devotions, they may have opportunities to hear a Sermon, or to be present at the publick Prayers of the Church.* For these publick Devotions keep the private warm, and as one hand washes the other, so the private fits the Soul for the publick, and the publick makes her return with greater appetite to her private Confessions, and Orisons. On such days, when our private Devotions are on the wing, and our hearts hot within us, we are the fitter to joyn with our fellow-Christians in publick, and may contribute to the hearing of their Prayers, for since the exaudition of Prayer depends much upon the fervour of it, Abstinence, as I said before, being a great means to give heat, and fire to our Prayers; we may on such days, by our addresses to God in publick, as well as private, signally promote not onely our own, but also our Neighbours welfare and happiness.

16. When at night we break our Fast, it's fit and convenient we should be very moderate in eating and drinking, least with the severities of the day we forget our resolutions of better obedience too. He that hath fasted all day, and gluts himself again at night, seems to be glad that the devotion is over, and to take greater delight in his corporal, than spiritual Food, and Nourishment. The serious frame of spirit, we have been in all day, must be preserv'd at night, and sure I am, that feeding our selves to the full at such times, will very much debilitate, and weaken the noble fence, we had all day, and therefore a courser diet than ordinary is fittest at night, when we have been with God all day. It keeps in the holy fire, and helps to maintain the serious thoughts, we have had; for the courser the Meat, or Food is, the less palatable will it be, and the less palatable, the less delight a man will take in't, and the less delight he takes in it, the more he'll reflect on the sad truths, that have been in his mind all day.

*Procop. de  
edif. Ju-  
stinian.  
Imp.*

To this purpose I remember a passage in *Procopius* concerning *Justinian the Emperour*. The week before *Easter*, faith he, he fasted every day, and led a very severe life,

life, such as meaner men would scarce have endured. All the day long he abstained from Meat and Drink, and being hungry at night, would not suffer his Servants to set either Bread or Wine, or any curious dishes upon his Table, but caused some Coleworts, and common Herbs of the Field, macerated for some days in Vinegar, to be brought up to him, and of these he did eat, and his drink was water, nor did he eat of this Food to satiety, but having tasted a little, would give over again, scarce taking so much, as would suffice nature.

3. And having laid down these Rules, my Reader will suppose, that I would not have mention'd them, but with an intent to exhort him to the frequent use of this holy Abstinence, the third particular I promised to offer to your consideration.

The *Grecians* at this day, scarce take us, who call our selves Protestants, for Christians, because we fast so little, thinking it impossible, to be followers of the Primitive Church, and not to imitate them in this Exercise. The truth is, it is a thing so little practised among us, except it be now and then, when we are put upon't by the Magistrate in some imminent

minent danger , that he that knows any thing of the antient Church , may wonder , how we come to leave out so considerable a part of devotion , our Church is not wanting in calling upon her members to observe days of Religious Abstinence , but the generality think themselves unconcerned at her Orders , and Fasting hath got so ill a reputation among us , because the *Roman* Church hath miserably perverted the use of it , that the generality are afraid to venture upon it , for fear they should be guilty with *Lot's* Wife , of looking back towards *Sodom* , from which they are escaped . But most certainly , this Exercise is a Christian Exercise,in despight of all those abuses , and was practised in the antient Church , as surely as the present Church of *Rome* is departed from that antient way of holiness . Go through the whole Nation , you will not see one Family in twenty set themselves to seek the Lord by a solemn Fast , through the whole year ; and I dare say , there are thousands , that never heard , or considered , that it was their duty . Gluttony , and Luxury , and Eating and Drinking heartily are made such necessary attendants of Mens lives , that they think , should they fast one whole day , and

and spend the whole day in Confessions, and Prayers, they should certainly dye at night. It's a sign they have a high esteem for Religion all this while, sure they do not think their Souls worth any thing, that do not, or will not refresh them now and then by such Abstinence; for the Soul never feeds better, than when the Body fasts.

Hear this ye drowsie, lazy, careless *Christians*, what do you call your selves Christians for, if you will not do as the antient Christians did? What made the first Planters of the Christian Religion Fast so often, if they had not apprehended it exceeding necessary? Were they Fools for so doing, or if they had not judged it highly expedient, would they have been so weak, as to have made it their most frequent Exercise? Can you think that Gods Spirit will ever visit you, while you mind nothing so much as your Belly? Is fulness of Bread, the way to be fill'd with the Holy Ghost? Do you ever hope to overcome the Lusts of the Flesh without this Exercise? Do you think your evil desires will ever die, without you chastise them by Fasting into better manners? Do you think the World and its Glories will ever become contemptible

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ble in your eyes, if by such Abstinence now and then you do not learn to despise it? Do you think you will ever become eminent Saints, while you are all for eating and drinking? Hath God denied himself so far, as to deliver up his Son for you, and cannot you deny yourselves in a little Meat, and drink for his sake, that you may take his death and passion into greater consideration? Do you think, God is so fond of you, that he'll make you partakers of the Divine Nature, while you know not, what denying the Body means? Do you think, you will ever get any great portion of Grace, while you think much of attending the Lord, in such mortifications? Do you think, your minds will ever pierce into the Mysteries of Gods love without such Humiliations? Do you think, you will ever be admitted to those high degrees of Gods favour, that the Saints of old arriv'd to without such abasement? Do you think your eyes will ever be as clear as theirs, while your Fasts are not as strict as theirs? Do you think, you will ever feel that joy, they felt, without such preparatives?

To add some other Motives, and encouraging Arguments.

I. By

1. By eating we are lost, and by fasting we must recover. Had *Eve* fasted, and abstained from the forbidden Tree, fasting would have been needless, and superfluous now, and if fasting was necessary in *Paradise*, shall it not be more needful now? Of the *Tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat*, said God, Gen. 2. 17. If the Medicine was wholesome, before we were sick, how much more wholesome must it be, now we are so? Was it expedient before our Lusts were in Rebellion against our Reason? And shall it not be more expedient, now that they war against the Soul? Had *Adam* hearkn'd to this Voice of God, he had never heard, that more dreadful word, *Earth thou art, and to Earth shalt thou return*; It was want of fasting, brought death, and trouble, and anguish into the world; and if things are cured by contraries, hot things by cold, and cold by hot, that first Luxury had need be expiated, and cured by Abstinence.

2. Fasting thus, we imitate the Holy Angels, they eat not, they drink not, and yet they praise God day and night; they have indeed Bread to eat, but that Bread is no other but the light of Gods countenance

tenance, which continually feeds and nourishes them into the highest happiness. When I say we imitate them, I press no such imitation, as that *Monk* pretended to, that would needs live like the Angels of God, and went into a barren Wildernes, taking no provision with him, believing that God would feed him without a *Metaphor* with Angels Food, but finding after a few days, that for want of convenient Food, he was ready to faint and die away, he returned to his friends again, and one of them hearing him knock, and calling, *Open the door, for I am such a one.* It's impossible, said his friend, for such a one is become an Angel, if thou art an Angel, what dost thou stand knocking here for? But he continued knocking confessed his Weakness, and begg'd of him to let him in, and give him somewhat to support Nature, and that he might recover strength. I mean no such imitation, but as fasting makes our Souls fly up more vigorously to Heaven, and fits us for divine contemplations, and heavenly meditations, so far we may be said in this Exercise, to imitate those blessed Spirits, whose contemplations of the divine

vine Goodness are always sprightly, and ravishing.

3. Frequent fasting is that, which will preserve health and life better, than any Physick whatsoever. What makes so much work for Physicians but eating and drinking to intemperance? Nay do not Physicians cure men by Abstinence? and if that be their great remedy, why should we not make use of it, before we have need of them? Gouts and Fevers, are best cured by fasting, and forbearing nourishing Victuals; If it lie in our power to prevent diseases, who can pity us, when we fall into them, seeing we are wilful in the procuring? So advantages, so profitable is God's service, it heals not only the inward, but the outward man too, conserves nature in its vigour, the eyes in their strength, the limbs in their nimbleness, and the head in an even temper. What made the ancient *Hermits*, that kept almost a perpetual Fast, live so long? Why! their frequent fasting: So true is that saying of *Solomon*, *The fear of the Lord prolongeth days*, Prov. 10. 27.

4. If you would displease the Devil, fast, if you would please him, neglect this Exercise. Nothing pleases the Prince of Darkness more, than feeding high, by

this he tempted the *Israelites* into Idolatry, *Numb.* 25. 2. By this he tempts men to Pride, to Fornication, to Adultery, to Lustfulness, to Wrath, to Malice, to Revenge. By fasting the Devil is expelled, by fasting his power is weaken'd, by fasting his Temptations lose their sting. By continual feeding and filling our selves he darkens our Understanding, clouds our Reason, dulls our Devotion, makes us indisposed for Gods service, and deprives us of that light, whereby our feet should be guided into the ways of peace. *How long then do ye halt between two opinions, if the Lord be God, follow him, but if Baal be God, follow him, 1 Kings 18. 21.*

5. Will not the very Heathen shame you in the last day, if you neglect this Exercise? (a) *Epicurus* himself lived upon Bread, and Water, and Apples, and Herbs, saying, that Bread and Water would satisfie Nature, and what was beyond that, was not to satisfie Nature, but Luxury. The like did *Pythagoras* before him, who defended that this slight and slender diet would not only preserve mens health, but furnish them with excellent Notions, and clarifie their Reason. (b) St. *Jerom* from Heathen Writers, tells us

(a) *Vid.*  
*Diog.*  
*Laert.*  
*lib. 10. de Epicurio.*  
*& lib. 8. de Pythag.*  
*τίνῳ δεῖραις  
 οὐκαντούσι  
 οὐδεποτέ  
 πλεόνει  
 τα μεγάλα  
 δαι.*

(b) *Hieron.*  
*tom. 2. lib. 2. contra Jovin.*

us, how under *Saturn* the First, men lived altogether upon Fruits, and Apples; how under *Cyrus* many of the Persians lived altogether upon Salt, and Bread and Water, and Barley-Flower; How the ancient Priests of *Egypt* abstain'd from all Flesh and Wine, did eat Bread but seldom, made Herbs, and Fruits of the Earth their onely Dyet, and would not touch either Milk or Eggs, saying, that the one was but liquid flesh, and the other nothing but Blood, onely the colour changed; and how the *Persian Magi* made use in their Diet of nothing but Flower, and Herbs. I do not from hence infer, that you must change your Diet, but onely this, what a Witness this temperance of the *Pagans* will be against you one day, even against your intemperance, and feeding high; and unwillingness to apply your selves sometimes to this Religious Exercise of Fasting and Abstinence.

6. So strange a power hath this Exercise with God, that by vertue of it many have wrought Miracles. I know not whether that old observation will hold water, that *Elijah*, while he kept to Bread and Water, wrought Miracles; but after he began to eate flesh, that power ceased. However, herein the Fathers agree,

*Author*  
*Sermon ad*  
*fratr. in*  
*Eremo per-*  
*terram ad-*  
*scr. Augu-*  
*stino. His-*  
*ton. cit.*

by Fasting *Daniel* stopt the mouths of Lions; by Fasting, the three young Men at the Court of *Babylon* quench'd the violence of the fire, which makes St. *Jerome* cry out, How lovely is this Exercise, which appeases God, asswages the rage of Lions, and chases Devils? By fasting the *Israelites* overcame the *Amalakites*; by fasting *Joshua* stay'd the course of the Sun; by fasting *Lazarus* comes to be received into *Abraham's* Bosom. I conclude this Subject with the words of St. *Ambrose*,

*Ambros. lib. de Eliâ & jejun. t. 1, 2.* Great is the Virtue of Abstinence, an Exercise so glorious, that the Son of God himself was enamour'd with it. The fasting *Elijah* speaks the word, and the Heavens become Brass; By fasting he raises the Widows Son to life again, commands Rain, calls for fire from above, and is wrapt-up in a fiery Chariot into Paradice; By his Forty days Fast he obtains the Honour of the Divine Presence, and the more he Fasts, the greater Marks of Gods favour he receives, stops the Stream of Jordan, and turns its slimy bottom into dust. For what is Abstinence but a Picture of Heaven; it's the life of Angels, the death of sin, the grave of evil concupiscence, the means of salvation, the root of grace, and the foundation of chastity. By this men climb up to Heaven a nearer way;

And

*And by the strength of this Elias ascended,  
before the Horses of fire mounted him on  
high.*

**III. Extraordinary Exercise.**

*Watching.* An Exercise commanded and recommended, *Mat. 26. 38. 40, 41.* *Mark. 13. 37.* *1 Pet. 5. 8.* *Acts 16. 25.* *Acts 20. 7.* By watching here I do not mean watchfulness of the Mind, a Subject, I have already sufficiently discours'd of in the Ordinary, and constant Exercises, but Abstinence from sleep, and keeping our selves awake for devotion sake; in a word, that which the Primitive Church hath expressed by *Vigils*, either sitting up the greatest part of the night, or rising at midnight to praise God, and to magnifie his Goodness. And though I do believe, that in the places, I have quoted for this piece of Self-denial, Christ intends chiefly mental Watching; yet some of the expressions are such, that they cannot but import corporal Watching too; and since people cannot be supposed to be exhorted to *Vigils* in the day time, when the greatest part of Mankind are awake, it must follow, that this Watching imports Self-denial in Sleep at night. And the reason of the necessity of

of this Exercise is given by St. Chrysostom,  
*The night was not made that we should  
 spend, and consume it all in sleep, witness  
 your Seamen, Tradesmen, and Artificers.  
 So the Church of God rises at midnight;  
 Imitate her, and behold the dance, and  
 order of the Stars; How profound is the  
 silence of nature, how quiet are all things!  
 Stand amazed at Gods dispensation. Now  
 is the Soul nimbler, subtler, quicker, fitter  
 to behold things sublime, and great. The  
 Darkness may lead thee into contemplation  
 of thy sin, and consequently into compunction.  
 seeing the Skie embroidered with Lights,  
 what an excellent consideration will this pro-  
 duce of thy Creators Wisdom! Midnight Pray-  
 ers strangely incline Gods favour, especially  
 if thou make that time a time of Lamenta-  
 tion, which others make a time of Rest and  
 Laziness.*

Night-Devotions in all probability have been very early in the World, and God seems to have given men an item of them by his appearing to them so often in the night. Before day Abraham rose to sacrifice his Son. In the night it was, that Jacob wrestled with God, and received the Blessing. In the night it was, that God led the Children of Israel out of Egypt. Samuel cryed unto the Lord all night.

Gen 22.3.

Gen.28.

11, 12.

Gen.32.24

Exod. 12.

12.

1 Sam 15.

11.

night. *Judith* rose up in the night, and performed her Devotions ; and who knows not what the mighty *David* saith of himself, that he washed his Couch with his Tears at night. In the night, the Son of God was Born, and the Angel of the Lord brought the news of it to the Shepherds.

The Heathen themselves, by a natural dictate of Reason thought it unjust to spend all the night in sleep without some expressions of Gratitude to their Deities. This made them not only sacrifice a Cock to the Night, which they adored as a Goddess; but by Watching and sitting up at night, and praying to their Gods, testifie their respect, and homage to that Being, from which they thought their Blessings did drop down. It's true, many of their nocturnal Devotions, were impious, prophane and ridiculous, but still this argues, that they thought it rational, and a duty to the Gods they worshipt, to adore them in the night as well as in the day; not onely the Vestals rose in the middle of the night to sacrifice, but the Indian Philosophers too paid their respect to the Sun at night; for it was their God, and the same they did in other places to *Venus, Bacchus, Apollo, Minerva.*

*cic. de li- nerva*, which makes *Cicero* and *Seneca*  
*gib. 2 Se-*  
*nec de pro-*  
*vid. c. 5.* speak highly in commendation of such  
 Vigils or devotional Watchings, if they  
 be used with Sobriety. How the Chris-  
 tians came to exercise themselves this  
 way is soon guessed at, if we reflect on  
 what Christ had told them, that he would  
 Mat. 2. 5. come to Judgment in the night; or to use  
 43. Rev. 3. 3. his own words, *as a Thief in the night*.  
 They trembled at the word, he had spoke,  
*Mark 13. 35. Watch therefore, for ye know  
 not, what time the Master of the house  
 cometh, whether at even or at midnight, or at  
 the Cock-crowing, or in the morning;* and this  
 made them deny themselves in their  
 Sleep so often, and rise to praise God,  
 lest coming in the night, he should find  
 them unprepar'd.

The example of *David* was a great  
 motive also, for *at midnight will I rise  
 and give thanks unto thee*, saith he, *Psal.  
 119. 62.* For the Christians in those ages  
 had a custom, which is much out of  
 fashion now, whatever they found, that  
 any holy man had done before them,  
 if it were possible they would imitate  
 him in that service, and devotion. This  
 made *Paul and Silas*, pray and sing praises  
 at midnight, and from hence, as well as  
 from Christ's watch-word it was, that the  
 Chri-

Christians in *Pliny's* time, used to meet before day, and sing a Psalm to Christ, as unto their God. And these Meetings *Tertullian* calls *Nocturnal Convocations*, as the Prayers then used were afterward call'd *Lamp-devotions*, or *Candle-devotions*. And though I do not deny but that the Persecutions of those Ages were partly the cause of their meetings at night, when their Adversaries the Heathen were asleep, and therefore unlikely to disturb them in their Worship, yet this could not be the sole reason; for sometimes they had respit, and lucid intervals, even under Heathen Emperors, and yet they continued their Vigils, and night services.

These night-devotions were in process of time performed in this order. 1. When day-light was shut in. 2. When they were going to bed. 3. At midnight. 4. By break of day; hence it is, that St. Jerome bids *Eustochium* rise twice or thrice, out of her bed at night to Prayer, and these four hours of Prayer at night joyned, with the three hours in the day, made up that ordinary Devotion which they undertook in imitation of Holy David; *Seven times a day do I praise thee, because of thy Righteous Judgments*, Psal. 119. 164. for they

*Plin. Sec.*

*lib. 10.*

*Epist. 79.*

*Tertull. ad*

*Uxor. l. 2.*

*c. 4.*

*Præces Lut.*

*ceruariae.*

*Epiphani.*

*in Com-*

*pend.*

*Hieron.*

*Ep. ad.*

*Eustoch. &*

*Demitr.*

Vid. Chry-  
<sup>ost. ad</sup>  
Psal. 118. they pray'd at nine of the clock in the morning , because then the Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles , at twelve of the Clock at noon,because then the Son of God was crucified, and at three of the Clock in the afternoon , because then Christ gave up the Ghost.

The Heathen,especially in the first and second Centuries after Christ , took so much notice of these midnight devotions of the Christians , that they ordinarily call'd them Owls , and men that shunn'd day-light, and though it's true, they accused them of promiscuous Copulations , eating of Children , and such Crimes ; partly because they could not tell, what they did in those night Assemblies, and therefore suspected it must be some ill thing they did , because they made use of the night ; partly because the villainous *Gnosticks*, who called themselves Christians , committed abominations much like these ; yet the World found afterwards, that it was their love to their Creator , and Redeemer , that made them watch, and pray, and praise and sing the goodness of their God at midnight. It hapned afterward that these Night-devotions were abus'd ; for Men and Women using to meet at night in Church-

Church-yards to praise God, some were so profane as to commit wickedness together and made those Devotions opportunities of impure and lascivious Actions ; upon which account they were forbid, especially to the Women, by the *Eliberitane can. 35.* *Council*, about the year 305 after Christ ; yet this restrain'd not the sober use of this Exercise, either in private houses, or in publick places, where men met by themselves ; whence it came to pass that in the succeeding Ages, they went so far, as to institute Societies of men, which they call'd *anopluntos*, or men that never slept, who relieving one another, sung praises to God day and night without any intermission or interruption ; For as soon as one Company had done, another began, and thus they represented Heaven, and the Joys of Angels here on Earth. This Zeal in these latter Ages is grown cold, and the luke-warmness of the present times is such, that he seems to be a setter forth of new Gods, that Preaches up this kind of Exercise ; yet I know not, whom we can imitate better, than the Christians, who lived in times of the purest Devotion, and to see, how far this Exercise may be revived among us, is the attempt of the following Discourse ; and to make it practicable

Vid. *Con-*  
*cil. Eliber.*  
*Placuit*  
*prohiberi,*  
*ne famina*  
*in camiter*  
*pervigilant*  
*to quod*  
*sepè sub*  
*obtentuora-*  
*tionis la-*  
*tenter set-*  
*lera com-*  
*mittant.*

*The Best Exercise.*

cticable, I shall first lay down some Rules concerning it, and then add some encouragements.

The Rules are these following.

1. There being at this day no publick meetings of Christians at night upon the account of devotion ; what is done, must be done by private persons in their own Chambers, or Housles. Where there are no publick Societies to encourage us , there our own Zeal must prompt us to such Exercises ; and did private Men and Families begin it once, the Governours of the Church, would soon encourage it publickly , who only forbear to urge it, because the age will not bear such watchfulness. A Christian that's Zealous for God's Glory, stays not for a publick Summons , if he find that such an act of Piety , is acceptable to God , and it's enough to him that the Saints of old did use it. What is order'd by God, or Man in publick , is onely to kindle fervour in Mens breasts at home, and as man for to pray need not every time , he is to kneel down, run to a publick Church to pray, so neither is a Christian obliged to neglect this Watching upon the account of devotion, because it is not exercised in pub-

publick. It's enough, that the Church doth recommend it to private Christians, though she cannot as yet bring private Christians to use this Self-denial publickly. It were to be wish'd that the Ministers of the Gospel did begin this Exercise, and possibly some well-disposed Christians would follow them, but the age we live in is so very apt to call all things Superstition, and Rags of the Whore of *Babylon*, that looks like Self-denial, that even those Divines, that would observe these Vigils publickly, dare not, for fear of greater inconveniences.

2. As I told you in the beginning, that these Vigils, or Watchings to devotion at night, had reference either to sitting up the greatest part of the night, or to rising at midnight, and employing some time in Prayers, and Praises, so where a man means to make use of the longer Vigils, he would not do amiss, if he used them once a week; though, if a man can bring himself to it, the Vigils appointed by our Church, are an excellent Rule to go by. To sit up one night in seven certainly cannot be prejudicial to Health, when we see persons upon more trivial occasions without doing themselves any hurt;

*Tertull. lib. de jejun.* fit up two or three nights in a week. The Christians of old, by what *Tertullian* tells us, sat up two nights in a week upon the account of Religion ; how happy should we think our selves to be, if we could persuade men to sit up but one. The shorter Vigils or rising at midnight to devotion, and spending some time in Pious acts, and Exercises may easily be performed, and practised every night, especially by Men and Women , who are single, and have nothing to take care of , but the things of God ; and there can be no great difficulty in it, if we will but force our selves, and push nature forward where it is loath to go. This would make us awake as duly about that time, as we do at seven or eight of the clock in the morning. Nature is a very tractable thing, especially where people are healthy , and will yield to modest violence , and the Scepter of Reason , and use will make that facile, and easie, which Men look upon under the wrong notion of impossibilities.

3. The Exercises proper for these Vigils, as I have partly intimated already, are praying, singing of Psalms, or reciting and repeating such Psalms as are most suitable to our Wants and Necessities , and Medi-

Meditating. *Theodosius* the Emperour did so, rose in the night, with his Sisters, and their chief employment was to sing Psalms, he one Verse, and they another; So little were Kings, and Princes ashamed in those days to express their Zeal in Religion. These Exercises drive away the tediousness of the night, and turn darkness into day. These make the Son of Righteousness rise upon us with healing under his Wings, and fill the Soul with oriental Splendour. These make the black night look lovely, and are the best weapon to disperse all terrors, the Officers Hell may scatter at that time among Gods Creatures. He that must have variety of employments at such times to prevent weariness, may begin with musing upon Gods wondrous Works, upon the blackness and deformity of Sin, and the dismalness of that Soul, that is a stranger to Divine Illumination. From Meditation, he may proceed to Prayer, and from Prayer to Singing; or if he be not able to Sing, to rehearsing the Songs of the Sweet-Singer of *Israel*; These happy Changes, like so many different Musical Instruments, will give new delights to his Soul, and make him loath to give over. These like rich Liquors, fill the heart and all the faculties thereof

with a divine briskness, and make the Soul rise from her devotion with a sacred relish, and appetite.

4. These Vigils, or Watchings at night to acts of devotion may be prejudicial to persons, that labour under weakness of body, nay and to such as work hard in the day-time, whether the work be Preaching or Servile labour; yet do not people work hard every day, nor do Ministers Preach every day, nor doth weakness continue every day, and therefore these must not be made impediments for the total neglect of this Exercise: sometimes people, that have work'd all day cannot sleep, and had not they better consecrate that time to the praises of that God, *who neither flumbers, nor sleeps?* However on those days, that men do not spend their Spirits with any extraordinary service or toiling, may not the Soul be ravish'd at night, and summon'd to apply her self to this delightful severity? Shall the softness of the Bed keep the Soul from such employment? or the warm down of the Pillow hinder a Christian from crying out with the excellent Psalmist, *My heart is fix'd, my heart is fix'd, I will sing and give praise. Awake up my glory, awake,*

*awake, I my self will awake right early,*  
Psal. 57. 7.

5. This Exercise at night may lawfully be neglected, if the evil that may ensue upon it, be greater, than the good which can be expected from it. This I speak, not onely with respect to what men may find upon the frequent use of this Exercise ; for a man may find upon frequent tryal, that it either indisposes him for nobler Duties, or discomposes him in his Health, whereby he is hindred from doing God farther service, and in such cases it may without sin be laid aside, but also with respect to the offence, his Neighbour may take at it; for it may happen, that a weak Christian may sink into great perplexities, because his strength will not bear this Exercise, while my example makes him look upon it as necessary ; or a man may have a Wife, that is exceeding tender of him, and upon his exercising himself in this manner, may either lead him a very unquiet life, or make her self sick with vexing and grieving at his austerities, upon a fancy that it will shorten his life, or cast him into some dangerous sickness, and consequently by her continual, and importunate, quarrelling about it, cause great disorders

ders in the Family , and by that means put a stop to the free course of some greater Duties ; and in both these cases , it may lawfully be omitted ; for God always bids us measure the Exercise of our Duties by the Good that flows from them , and therefore if the evil , or mischief accidentally attending such Exercises , be greater than the good that we can suppose to reap by them , God certainly requires not the practice or performance of them . Yet even here , it's fit we use such Arguments to our Neighbours or Friends , as may discover to them the weakness of their surmises , and the needlessness of their Scruples , for fear we seem too easie in yielding to the neglect of a thing , which otherwise may be a great Promoter of Holiness .

Indeed in the great moral Duties of the Gospel , which are expressly , and peremptorily commanded , I must neither hearken to Father , nor Mother , neither Wife , nor Sister , nor Children , but as St. *Jerom* speaks , trample upon them all , rather than neglect a known duty , and undergo all the inconveniences , and reproaches in the World , rather than commit a sin wilfully ; but this will not hold in circumstantial things , such as this praising

sing of God at midnight is ; for these must ever give way to the more substantial Duties of Brotherly Kindness, and Charity.

6. He that ventures upon these Vigils, or Exercises either all night , or for some time at midnight , must be a person , that loves God fervently ; and in vain do I , or any man alive, attempt to bring any person to this piece of Self-denial, without that person knows , what a strong love to God means. No man can watch, that doth not love. As weary as *Jacob* was with his Journey, yet love would not suffer him to sleep at night , but he must awake to contemplation ; and while he was engaged in't , the Angel of the Covenant wrestled with him, and blessed him. Love shakes off drowsiness , and rest it self makes it restless. Love breaks forth the more vigorously at night, the less there is to hinder it in its operations. Love makes such Exercises easie, and a Christian that hath love to spur him on, runs chearfully in this narrow way. Love carries him beyond inconveniences , and makes him desirous to lose his life, for him that gave it. Love embraces all opportunities to exercise its gratitude to the Lord *Jesus*.

and there is no time comes amiss to this inestimable Grace. He that either hath felt or read what love will do to Friends on Earth, will be able to guess at the truth of what I do propose, and sure he never knew yet what being sick of love is, I mean of love to Christ, that never found himself in a disposition or temper to say,  
*By night on my Bed I sought him whom my Soul loveth; I sought him, but I found him not; I will rise now, and go about the City in the Streets, and in the broad-ways I will seek him, whom my Soul loveth, I sought him, but I found him not. The Watchmen that go about the City found me, to whom I said, saw ye him, whom my Soul loveth; It was but a little, that I passed from them, but I found him, whom my Soul loveth, I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my Mothers house, and into the Chamber of her that conceiv'd me,* Cantic.

## 3. 1, 2, 3.

7. That this Exercise of rising at midnight to Prayer may be more satisfactory, and effectual, I would advise to going to bed betimes, that nature being refresh'd with some sleep before that time, may be the fitter for this service; and, it's very probable, that those who in the Primitive Church used this Watchfulness, obser-

observed this Rule. In this Age Tradesmen, and those that have any toiling Employment in the World, have brought themselves to an ill custom of sitting up at their Trade till midnight almost, and having tired themselves with running after their Worldly profit all day, it cannot be otherwise, but they must find themselves very unfit for this nocturnal Exercise. If ever a man becomes Master of this Virtue, he must learn to accommodate his business to his Religion, not his Religion to his business; and as Spiritual fervour must be the first mover, and principal wheel that must set this a going; so where Religion is thought worth nothing, all that we have said, must be as the news of the destruction of *Sodom* was in the Ears of *Lots* Kinsmen, a pretty Tale, and that's all. If *Euclides* of *Megara* thought not much of it, to consult *Socrates* in the night, why should we think it troublesome to participate of Gods instructions in the night-season? We, I say, who are to tread in the steps of the great Bishop and Shepherd of our Souls, and it was his custom, we know, to rise in the morning a great while before day, to go into a solitary place to pray, *Mark* i. 35.

*The Best Exercise.*

8. The Task will be more easily, and more clearly performed, if we can get one or two or more of our acquaintance to joyn with us in these nocturnal Exercises ; Company is a great encouragement to such acts of Piety, and man being naturally a sociable Creature, Society not onely comforts him, but is a spur to devotion, especially to such devotion, as is attended with severity. One keeps the other from fainting under his Burden ; and if one grows cold, the others zeal is enough to inspire him with new vigour and alacrity. Those seven Men, *Ruffinus* speaks of, who divided the night, and allotted four hours for sleeping, four for praising of God, and Prayer, and four for working, and likewise the day, and appointed six for working, three for reading, and praying ; three for eating, and walking, without all peradventure found great encouragement in one another's Society, and this their order would scarce have lasted so many years as it did, if it had fallen to any single persons lot to kept it up.

*Ruffin. lib.  
3. de vlt.  
Monach.  
sect. 199.  
200.*

The same Author hath a passage of another company, seven in number, who on Saturdays about three of the Clock in the afternoon used to meet, and having eaten

eaten together (for in that age they eat but once a day, and commonly towards the evening) they fell into spiritual discourses, banishing all secular busines, and laying aside all thoughts of worldly things, and talk'd onely of Heaven and future Glory, of the Rest of Saints, and of the Misery of the Damned ; and when they had spent some time in such discourses, they sat up all night, praising and magnifying, and singing the Goodnes of God ; and this they continued, (pausing now and then, and spending some time in silence and meditation) till three of the Clock in the afternoon next day, and so they departed again every one to their several Habitations.

So great a support doth the Soul receive from good Society, that is of the same mind, of the same fervour, and of the same zeal and earnestnes to glorifie God ; and a man will do that, encouraged by Society, which before he could not have been drawn to perhaps by the strongest enforcives, or arguments.

From these Rules, I come in the next place to recommend to my Readers this nocturnal Exercise, and to give them some encouragement to this piece of Self-denial. The *Arabians* tell this passage, or fable

*The Best Exercise.*

*Present  
State of  
Egypt, p.  
64.*

fable of the *Ostrich*, that when she intends to hatch her Eggs, she sits not on them, as other Birds, but the Male and Female by turns hatch them, with their Eyes only, and if one be hungry, and minded to seek for Food, it gives notice to the other by a certain cry, to come, and relieve it, and being come, it continues looking upon the Eggs so long till the other be returned; and they add, that if either of them should but leave looking on never so little a time, the Eggs would spoil and rot. I do not warrant the Truth of the Story, however the *Coptite Christians* are so perswaded of the reality of the thing, that they hang up a lighted Lamp in their Churches between two Ostrich's Eggs, over against the Priest that officiates, to bid him be attentive, and watchful about their devotions.

I know not whether such an Emblem would be any great engagement to Christians in this age, to watch at night to the Exercises, I have mention'd; but however, the Subject is not so poor and barren, as to be destitute of Arguments. And

I. Doth this Exercise seem so grievous to you, that can rise at any time in the night

night to get some considerable gain ? Would you think it troublesome to rise at midnight to get ten or twenty pounds ? Were you sure to get every time you rise at night, half a score of Broad pieces of Gold, would not you make a shift to get up ? This shews you can do it , and, but that you think you may save your Souls at a cheaper rate, you would certainly do much for their profit, and advantage too. Sure the Soul may get considerable gain by such vigilance. In the dead of the night, while other people sleep, to get up and to converse with God , is to be truly ambitious of His favour, and it is his Rule, *I love them that love me , and those that seek me early , shall find me ,* Prov. 8.17. where God sees a holy Soul thirsting for him in the night, he certainly satisfies that thirsty Soul with goodness, and opens for her Rivers in high places, and Fountains in the midst of Valleys, makes her Wilderness a Pool of Water, and her dry Land Springs of Water, *Isai. 41. 18.* where men prevent the dawning of the morning, to meditate in his word , God hears their Voice according unto his loving kindness , and quickens them according to his word , *Psalms 119. 147, 148, 149.* This is the best

best preparation for the duties of the following day, and he truly begins the day with God, that at midnight rises to give thanks unto the God of his Salvation.

2. Behold how High-way-men and Thieves can rise at midnight to Rob and Murder Men! Behold how watchful those unhappy Creatures are to circumvent the unwary *Traveller*! Are these wretches so watchful to lose their Souls, and shall not we be as watchful to save ours? Shall they think the Devils service worth their watching at night, and shall not we think the service of our God worth so much? Do they watch to contrive mischief, and shall not we do so to contrive our felicity?

*Ut jugulint homines surgunt de nocte latrones. Ut te ipsum serves, non ex pergisceris? Horat Epist. lib. 1. Ep.*

2. The silent night rouzes their Spirits into action, and shall it dead ours altogether? Shall not wedo as much to make sure of Heaven, as they do to make sure of Hell? Or is the undoing of our selves a more charming act, than securing our everlasting interest? How many are there that can sit up drinking and dancing and revelling all night? Can the Devils Votaries deny themselves, for their Master, and shall we do nothing for ours? Is the true God the onely Deity, that deserves no Self-denial at our hands?

And

And must the Devil be adored with greater reverence than He , at whose presence Devils tremble ? Men are not weary of playing at Cards, or Dice all night, and cannot they watch one hour with Christ at night ? Can Men break their sleep to mind the works of Darkness, and shall not we break ours , for doing things, which become the Children of Light ?

3. To rise thus at midnight to praise God is an act of Charity to our Neighbours ; for Thieves, and Purloiners finding us up at a time which they pitch upon for their Robberies , may be afraid of making attempts upon a Neighbours house for fear of being discover'd by us, who are awake, and engaged in devotion. Not to mention, that such Exercises of singing praises unto God , may strike the Robber, if he hear them, into fear and trembling, and oblige him to go away without his intended Prey , as much as the innocent Infants smiles did the *Turk*, that came with an intent to Murder it ; so that this Watching at night is to contribute in part to the publick Good, and to be instrumental in our Neighbours Preservation.

4. How

*The Best Exercise.*

Τριημέρης α  
καὶ μετον  
πλήνησε  
κακούμε-  
νος  
Ignat. E-  
piſt. ad Po-  
lycarp.

4. How happy will it be, to be found praying and praising God, should God call us away from this World, at midnight. *Blessed is the Servant, whom his Master, when he comes shall find so doing;* Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him Ruler over all that he hath, Luke 12. 43, 44. One great reason why the Primitive Christians rose at midnight to Prayer, as I said before, was because they knew not, but Christ might come at that time to Judgment. Did they thus prepare for his coming above Sixteen hundred years ago, and have not we far greater reason to watch for his coming, upon whom the ends of the World are come? Did they think the Day of Judgment was near at hand, and shall not we fear it much more? Did they think to keep their Garments white, and their Lamps burning against the Bridegroom came, and shall not we think so much more? Were they afraid of being a sleep at midnight for fear a noise should be made, *Behold the Bridegroom cometh,* and have not we far greater reason to be afraid? Did they so long ago shake off all carnal security, in expectation of the coming of the Son of God, and shall we rest quietly all night without think-

thinking once what our case may be ? Sure there is some strength in these Arguments , if the ground were but fit for them, if our hearts were but prepared for them, if the thorns and briars of worldly cares did not choak them ; and as tedious as the Exercise may seem to be, certainly means might be found out to make it easie. And,

1. Use would make it so. In the Works of St. *Teresa* there is mention made of one *Peter de Alcantara* , who for forty years had slept but one hour and a half <sup>Opp. *Teresi* in vita c. 47.</sup> in a day and a night, and that he found nothing so troublesome to him, as breaking himself of his sleep, which to effect he always sat when he slept: *Aristotle*, to wake himself in the night, would hold a bras Ball in his hand , over a Copper-Bason, when he composed himself to rest, which Ball when he was fast asleep, would drop out of his hand into the Bason , and with the noise it made , awake him, and give him notice, that it was time to apply himself to his Studies again, and his Scholar *Alexander the Great* would sometimes imitate him in that particular, and nothing but use made it easie to them. Of *Mecænas* indeed we read , that for three years together he slept not at all;

Ee

and

Vid. Diog.  
Laert de  
*Aristoteles*

and Physicians in their observations have taken notice that some have lived without sleep nine days, some ten, some fifteen, without any prejudice to their health; but these examples we may justly look upon as Miracles, rather than effects of use, and custom; by use a man may much abridge himself in his sleep, but cannot ordinarily attain to a perpetual vigilancy, and as to be always waking, is to be Immortal, so to sleep more, than is needful, is like death, rather than life.

2. And to this use we shall arrive the sooner, if we eat very moderately; for it's the fumes of a full stomach that cause immoderate sleep. Eating little will support Nature better than plentiful Meals; We first corrupt Nature, and teach it to crave more than it wants, and the ill custom brings a necessity upon us to keep up our intemperance. By this moderate eating *Marcellus Strategus* in *Commodus* his time, brought himself to that vigilance, that he was the object of all mens admiration. It was St. Anthony the Hermits slender and simple diet, that enabled him to observe those laborious Vigils, we read of, and hence it was, that he used to quarrel with

with the Sun, when he saw him rise, for disturbing the joy and sweet communion he had with God all night, so true was that saying of *Scopelianus* of old, *That the night is the best friend of the Soul, and participates of the Wisdom, and Glory of the Deity.*

3. Nothing will facilitate this watchfulness at night, more than frequent contemplations of what others do, and have done before us. They were men, and so are we ; they carried flesh and blood about them, and so do we ; they had infirmities of the flesh, as well as we ; we have Souls as well as they, and may have courage as well as they, if we will take the same reasons, they did, into consideration. A shadow of this Virtue is to be seen in the *Cock* and *Lion*, the former of which (*a*) *Pliny* justly calls a Creature (*a*) *Plin.* born to call People out of their Beds, and *Hist. Nat.* *Lio. c. 21.* the latter therefore was made by the Antients the Symbol of Vigilance.

The (*b*) Dragon that kept the *Golden Fleece*, was always awake, and the Hundred-ey'd Shepherd then ceased to live, when he ceased to watch ; Emblems these are of the Exercise before us, and the Lord *Jesus* therefore continued in Prayer all night, to shew that if the Master

*The Best Exercise.*

could watch for the Servants; the Servants have reason to watch for their Ma-

(c) *Chrysol. ster*, saith the eloquent (c) *Chrysologus*. Of Homil. 24. the *Pantarba* or Shining-stone they re-  
de seruo  
Vig.

(d) *Philoſ. it* sends forth a grateful splendour, and  
vit. *Apol-*  
*lon. l. 3. c.* seems to turn night into day. Whether

there be such a Stone, or no, I dispute not, but the Moral of it are these nocturnal Praises, and *Hallelujahs*; these make it day at midnight, and whatever darkness may be on the face of the Earth, I am sure, in a Soul that uses them, the Sun shines, and a glorious charming Light arises. The night they say is a time, that Spirits walk abroad; It's true enough, where men use this Exercise; for an Infinite Spirit, the God of Grace and Peace walks forth to meet them, and the Soul makes her Chamber another *Mahanaim*, a walk for the Host of God. I conclude this Subject with the words of *Nestor* in *Homer to Diomedes*, and the rest.

Gen. 32.  
3, 2.

"Εγέρο Τυνός γέ. Τὶ πάντα χρν ὑπνον ἀντεῖς  
Οὐκ αἰεὶς Τρῶες ἐπὶ θρωσκῷ πεδίστα.  
Ἐισὶ γάγχι νεῶν, ὀλίγος δὲ τις χῶρος ἐρύκει  
Οὕτω νῦν φίλα τέκνα, φυλάσσετε, μηδὲ τὴν ὑπνον  
Αἴρετος, μή χάρμα γενώμενα δυσμενίεσσον.

Which I thus Paraphrase :

*What? Sleep all night, and th' Enemy so  
near?*  
*When from the Camp you may their Voices  
bear?*  
*Is it not time unto our Arms to fly,  
When but a Hill 'twixt them and us doth  
lie?*  
*Up, stand upon your guard, my Children,  
watch,*  
*Lest the bold foe you unawares do catch ;  
And in your Slaughter triumph, and do  
scorn*  
*Your braver Souls, like Men to ruine born.*

## IV. Extraordinary Exercise.

*Self-Revenge*; an Exercise insisted on, 2 Cor. 7. 11. and practised by St. Paul, 1 Cor. 9. 27. and by *Timothy*, 1 Tim. 5. 23. I distinguish this Exercise from the rest, not because Fasting, and Vowing, or Watching have nothing of Self-revenge in them, but because the word is more general, and includes all other lawful severities, which holy men have used upon themselves; so that this Exercise takes in all other acts of Self-denial, undertaken on purpose that the Soul may learn to die to the World, and to have her conversation in Heaven, an Exercise, as antient, as Christianity, nay, as antient, as the Law of *Moses*; for it began as early, as the *Nazarites*, who neither cut their Hair, nor shaved their heads, nor drank any Wine, or strong Drink, nor tasted of any Liquor of the Grapes, nor eat any dried Grapes, nor any thing that was made of the Liquor of the Grapes, or of any strong Drink; severities used on purpose, and by Gods approbation, that they might more entirely dedicate themselves to Gods service; And these austen-  
ties we find afterwards used by *Elijah* the Prophet, of whom we read, that he

Numb. 6.

2, 3, 5, 6,

7.

was

was a hairy man , and girt with a girdle  
of Leather about his Loins ; I know some <sup>2 Kings 1.</sup>  
understand the expression, a *Hairy man*,<sup>8.</sup>  
of a Hairy Garment , but this sense <sup>לעוש</sup>  
seems not to agree with the Hebrew  
Language , which doth not use to ex-  
presa mans Garment by such words ;  
but the nature or external shape , and  
form of his Body ; so that he either wore  
his hair very long, and without dressing, as  
the *Nazarites*, who were a Religious Or-  
der among the *Jews*, or he seemed liker  
*Onuprius*, who met *Paphnntius* in the  
Wilderness, hairy all over, insomuch that  
little else could be seen about him , a  
piece of austerity the Prophet made use  
of , that he might learn to despise the  
World , and that no temptations might  
make any impression upon him , which  
usually insinuate into our Hearts, and Af-  
fections , where the body is used deli-  
cately , and men take care to dress up  
themselves curiously to please the eyes  
of the Spectator ; and though it's true  
that *Elijah* was a fore-runner of St. *John*  
the *Baptist* , as St. *John Baptist* was of  
*Christ* , and St. *John* is said to have had his  
Raiment of Camels hair , which seems  
to make it probable, that this hairiness of  
*Elijah*, was only in his Cloaths ; because

*Vid. Pap-*  
*nut vte.*  
*Onuphr.*

c. 2.

*The Best Exercise.*

those of his *Antitype*, or Successor were so ; yet the Prophesie that God would send *Elijah* before the great day of the Lord *Jesus* his appearing in the World, importeth not that he would be exactly like him in his way of living, and the form of his body, but that he should come in the Spirit and Power of *Elias*, to turn the hearts of the *fathers to the children*, and the *disobedient to the Wisdom of the Just*, as the Angel said to Zacharias, *Luke 1. 17.*

These severities were afterwards practised by the *Rechabites*, *Jer. 35. 6, 7.* for they neither drank Wine, neither they, nor their Sons for ever ; neither did they build Houses, nor sow Seed, nor plant Vineyards, nor possess any Land, but dwelt in Tents all their days, poor, and mean, and minding the Salvation of their Souls. When they ceased, the *Essenes*, and the *Pharisees* took up that Discipline. The *Essenes* lived retired from the World, avoided Cities, and Crowds of People, as temptations to looseness, and debauchery, hoarded up no Money, purchased no Lands, but lived altogether upon the labour of their hands, and nothing in the World could oblige them to have a hand in making Spears, or Swords, or Arrows, or Breast-plates, or Arms, or any other Instru-

*Philon.*

*Diei rū  
mētia Cm.  
dīcīr fīrā  
hāvōfōr.*

Instruments of War , because they said, God had ordered, Mankind should live peaceably. They despised Riches, Honours, Pleasures, delicate Dishes, and lived upon little , contented with a coarse Diet , and aiming at nothing in this World , but Food and Raiment , if ten of them met , none would speak till he had first obtained leave of the other nine ; and they ever wore but one Coat, and wore it so long , till it was quite worn out, and then they thought of purchasing another , and all this they did , that they might learn to die to the world, and live like men, that had Souls to be saved. The *Pharisees* went much farther in these severities, even to Superstition. Joseph. Antiq. lib. 18. c. 2. Besides the first Fruits, they paid double Tythes ; and besides these Tythes, they gave away the Thirtieth, and the Fiftieth parts of their Incomes to the Church , or the Treasury for the Poor ; they lay on hard Beds, had sometimes no other Pillows, but *Cylinders*, and many times Pillows fill'd with Straw, and Nails, and sharp Stones, that they might not sleep too long, but awake to Prayers, some would knock their heads against a Wall, and others hurt their feet in going along the Streets, because they walk'd with their

their eyes shut, being loath to look up.  
 Mat. 23.15. on a Woman; and others, as Christ saith,  
 would compass Sea and Land to make a  
 Profelyte, disfigure their Faces, and look  
 Mat. 6.16. very ruefully, insomuch, that they seem'd  
*Skeletons* rather than Men. Though they  
 had Wives, yet they would tye them-  
 selves to Continence, and Chastity, some  
 for four, some for nine, some for ten years,  
 and keep themselves undefiled from all  
 carnal pollution.

Whether St. Paul learn'd the severities,  
 he used upon his body, in the School of  
 the Pharisees, at the feet of Gamaliel, we  
 cannot tell, but that he used them, seems  
 to be very plain, from 1 Cor. 9. 27. *I*  
 See Dr. Hammond, *keep under my body, and bring it into sub-*  
 i: Luk. 18. *jection*, where the Greek word *ὑποτασσω*,  
 s. as a learned Critick of our own observes,  
 is very emphatical, and signifies to strike  
 under the eye, or to give one a blew eye, as  
 Wrestlers in the *Isthmian* games, that cuff-  
 ed one another, and wounded one another  
 and though it is uncertain, whether the A-  
 postle proceeded so far in this mortificati-  
 on, as to wound himself, or beat himself to  
 that degree, that those *Agonists* did, yet it  
 is more than probable, that he did afflict  
 his body, and sought to keep it under  
 as a Servant, or as a Wrestler doth his  
 fellow,

fellow, that it might not be able to strike again, and undertook such austeries, as made his Soul more than a Conquerour.

Indeed *Christ* himself lived but poor, destitute, and afflicted, and had not where to lay his head, and whether it was in imitation of *Christ*, that they would be conformable to him in all things, or whether it was out of emulation of the *Jews*, that it should not be said that the *Essenes*, and *Pharisees* did more than they ; the Christians about that time, and in the succeeding Ages seemed to think themselves obliged to put their Bodies to some afflictions, and severities in this World, for the glories of another, which made *Nicholas* the Deacon, whom we read of, *Act. 6.5.* instil this Principle into his Disciples, that they should ~~neglect their Bodies~~, abuse, or mortifie the Flesh, use their Bodies coarsly, that they might be more active in Spiritual Concerns, and the same Doctrine, faith *Eusebius*, was taught by the Apostle *Matthias*, and though many have slander'd *Nicholas*, and branded him as an Apostate, and the Author of a *Heresie*, mentioned, *Rev. 2.15.* and as one, that gave way to promiscuous copulations, and made Scortation a venial sin ; yet the holy man hath been

*Vid. Eus.  
lib. Hist.  
Eccl. l. 3.*

*c. 26.*

*Clem. A-*

*lex. from.*

*lib. 3. sect.*

*3.*

*Nicephor.*

*Ecclif.*

*Hist. l. 3.*

*c. 15.*

been wronged, as appears by *Eusebius*, and *Clemens Alexandrinus*, and it's very likely that those who call'd themselves *Nicollitans*, having heard *Nicholas* use that Motto<sup>s</sup> that the Flesh must be abused, descended their impure Doctrine with that saying, and from thence were called *Nicollitans*, whereas *Nicholas* understood no more by it, than that Flesh must be subdued, and bridled by such severities as we are able to bear, that our Faith and Hope may become more lively, and our inward and outward Man more expedite for Heaven.

*Philo de  
vit. con-  
temp.* If they be Christians, that *Philo* speaks of in his Book of a Contemplative Life, (*Eusebius* and St. *Jerome* think so) St. *Mark* the *Evangelist*, it's like instructed them in these severities; for they used them, and were the wonder of the World; and who knows not how the succeeding ages, pressed this Self-revenge upon all those, that were fallen either into Adultery, or Idolatry, or Murder, and repented; and what severities they inflicted on them, how they obliged them to stand in a torn Garment at the Church door, and made them weep and fall down before the believers, that enter'd into the Church, and beg of them to pray for them? How after

*S. Basil.*  
*Ad Amphi-*  
*loch can.*  
*57, 58, 59,*  
*72, 73.*  
*Council.*  
*Ancyr. can.*  
*2, 3, 4, 5,*  
*& seq.*  
*Con. Nicen.*  
*I. can. II.*

ter this severity, they placed them among the *Catechumenes*, then gave them leave to receive the Blessing of the Congregation, and when they had passed through all this Discipline, they gave them leave at last to joyn with Believers in their Prayers and Sacraments.

*Tertullian*, who lived about the year 203. after *Christ*, expresses these severities thus. Repentance is a Discipline of Humiliation, and Prostration, and en-joyns such a Conversation, as provokes and allures Gods mercy. It determines, what Meat the Penitent must eat, what Cloaths he must wear; it bids him go and wallow in Ashes, lye in Sackcloath, throw dust upon himself, let his Soul melt into grief, and treat those Members scur-vily that have been Instruments in sinning, to eate and drink nothing that's pleasing to the Pallate, but only so much as will keep Soul and Body together, to Pray, to Weep, to Sigh, to Howl, to Roar, to fall down at the knees of Gods Minis-ters, and to beg of all he meets with, to supplicate to God for him. This is Repentance. If you repent you must, saith *Pacianus*, weep before the Church, lament your lost, and sinful Life in a sor-did Garment, you must pray, and roll on the

*Tertul. de  
Poenit. c.  
8,9. & Cy-  
prian de  
lapis &  
Epist. 31:*

*Pacian.  
Parentes ad  
panit. Bib-  
liotb. Pp.  
tom. 3.*

the Earth ; if any invite you to the *Bath*, or some such Divertisement, you must refuse to go ; if any bid you to a Feast, you must say, these things are for the happy, I have sinn'd against God, and am in danger to perish for ever, what should I do at Banquets , who have wrong'd the Lord ? you must take the poor by the hand, beseech the Widow, lie at the feet of the Presbyters, and beg of the Church to forgive you , and you must do any thing rather than perish. And accordingly *Natalius* the Confessor, when corrupted with Money , he had suffered himself to be made a Heretical Bishop, and afterward by a signal Providence became sensible of his Error ; the first thing he did was to put Sackcloth and Ashes upon himself, and to break forth into a large stream of Tears , and fall down at the feet of Bishop *Zephirinus*, and of the whole Clergy, nay, and of the Laity too, and to entreat them to weep with him, and seek Gods Face , and the restoration of his favour to him , and therefore the Author of the Sermons of Saints in St. *Austin's* Works, tells us, Repentance for Crimes and greater Sins , must be attest-ed by strong Cries, and Tears, by Roar-ing, and Howling, by voluntary Separa-tion

*Euse. Eccl.  
Hist.lib. 5.  
c. ult.*

*Sermon.  
41. de  
Sanctis.*

tion from the Communion of Saints, by Mourning, by a long continued sorrow : It's necessary, that he who hath sinn'd to the scandal of many, should repent to the edification of many. We must mourn on such occasions, for the loss of our Souls, as we bewail the dead Carcasses of our Friends. If a man have lost a Wife, or a Son, or a Woman her Husband, they tear their Hair, beat their Breast, continue in sadness, and shed Tears a great while together. Thus must we deal with our forlorn Souls. Shall we take on thus for dead Flesh, which we cannot raise to life again ? And shall we not mourn for a Soul, that hath been dead, and may by repentance be brought to life again ? And upon this Account *Theodosius* as great an Emperour as he was, Theodoret.  
lib. 5. c. 17. repenting of the slaughter committed by his order upon the *Thessalonians*, fell down upon his Face in the Church, his Soul with *David* cleaved to the dust, he tore his Hair, beat his Forehead, and wash'd the Ground with his Tears. Be Ambros.  
lib. ad  
Virg. corr.  
c. 8. contented, saith St. *Ambrose* to the Virgin, that had suffer'd her self to be deflowered, to undergo any Labour, any shame, any disgrace in the World, so thou canst but escape eternal Fire ; judge thy self with rigour,

rigour, and severity ; break loose from the cares of this life, count thy self dead, think how thou may'st revive, and live again ; Put on a mourning Garment, chastize thy polluted Members with due severities ; Cut off thine hair, which hath given occasion to Luxury. Let thine Eyes run down with Tears, which have look'd lasciviously upon Man : Let thy Face grow pale, which once look'd fresh and lively with impudence ; macerate thy Body, put on a careless Dress, crucifie thy Senses, fright the People with thy Ashes, and Hair-cloth ; let thy Heart melt like wax, let this be thy Life, thus order thy Conversation, let this be the Dress of thy Repentance, and then thou wilt dare to hope, if not for Glory, yet for freedom from eternal punishment. And the like advice he gives to the Man that deflower'd her. Get thee into the Prison of Repentance, gird thy Bowels with Chains, macerate thy self with Sighs, beg the help of Saints, throw thy self down at the feet of the Elect, banish all blandishments from thy Soul, and by continual Weeping, and Mourning, cleanse thy Heart.

*Oper. Hit-ton, tom. 9.* To this purpose speaks the Author of the Epistle to *Susanna* in St. Jerome's Works, the greatness of the Wound in the Conscience,

science, must ever be answered by the greatness of Repentance, and Repentance is not a matter of Words, but Actions. And you then perform it, if you set before you the Glory from which you are fallen, the Book of Life from which your name hath been blotted out, and the outward darkness, where there is howling and gnashing of Teeth, and which you are become obnoxious to. And having fixed this principle in your Soul, that Repentance is the onely refuge after Baptism; you must think no Labour, no Rest, no pains too much, nothing undecent, or unhandsome to be freed from everlasting Torments. Think on these things, and become a severe Judge of your own Actions. In the first place you must bid barewel to all the cares of this World, and look upon your self as dead to this Earth, and let your only study be, how to rise to life again. Then take and put on a mourning Weed, and punish thy Mind and Members with daily castigations. Cut of thy Hair, which hath been the occasion of thy Luxury. From thine Eyes let bitter Tears flow down, because by them thou hast defiled thy Soul. Let thy Face grow pale, which thy sins have given a chearful, lovely colour to. Strow.

F f

Ashes

Ashes on thy Body, let Hair-cloth sting thy Flesh, let thy Heart melt like Wax within thee, crucifie thy Senses, which have let in the Poison. This is the Process of Repentance, and doing so, though thou may'st not hope for any high degree of Glory, yet thou may'st be confident, thou wilt be freed from everlasting anguish; so *Nineveh* escaped her ruine. In this manner was the mighty *David* justified. He that spares not himself, him will the Almighty spare. Great sicknesses must have signal Cures; great Crimes require great Satisfaction. On these Planks thou may'st swim out of the gulf of Perdition. These are the Agonies, the Pangs of a true Repentance.

*Chrysost.*  
tom. 5. E-  
pistol ad  
*Theodor.*  
*Lapsum.*

*Hieron. in*  
*vit. Paul*  
*Rom.*

Of this *Theodorus* was so sensible, that being fallen into Fornication, and become sensible of his great transgression, he went and retired from the World, shut himself up in a Cave, lived there the remainder of his days upon Bread, and Water, and spent his time in Fasting, in Prayer, and in watering his Couch with his Tears; and indeed this advice was duly follow'd by the noble *Paula*, though she was guilty of no such Crime. After her Husbands decease, she could never be perswaded to sit down at Table with

a Man, though never so holy. Even in a Fever, she would not lie upon a soft Bed, but on the Ground upon a Mat. She bewailed and wept over her little Sins, as much, as if they had been the greatest Crimes, and when St. Jerome exhorted and admonish'd her not to spoil her Eyes with weeping, but preserve them for reading the holy Scripture; No, said she, this Face of mine must be besmeared with dirt, which formerly I have painted and patched. My body must be afflicted, and used coarsly, which formerly hath been given to Carnal ease, and worldly delights; my frequent laughter must be revenged with perpetual weeping; My soft Linnen, and my precious Silks must be changed into uneasie Sackcloath, and I who have endeavoured to please the World, and my Husband, must now learn to please Christ entirely.

St. Jerome himself was not backward *Hieron.*  
in this Exercise, I wrapt my self up in *Epiſtol.*  
Sackcloath, saith he, and struck the Members  
of my body, which would scarce *ad Eustoch.*  
hang together, to the ground, I remem-  
ber, I cryed aloud, sometimes I joyned  
the night to the day, and mourned, and  
did not give over beating of my body,

till the Lord rebuking *Satan's Angel*, shed into my Soul Peace, and Tranquillity. And of the same Judgment was St. *Crysostome*, who to fit himself for the holy Ministry, as soon as he was made Reader, retired into a Mountain, where joyning himself to a *Syrian Hermit*, he learn'd Austerity, Continence, Chastity, and Mortification. In this condition he spent four years, and then to subdue the Lusts of the Flesh more perfectly, he absconded himself in a desert place, where his Lodging was, no other, than the bare Ground, his Table no other than a great Stone, and his Exercise nothing but Reading and Studying the Scriptures, and mastering his Carnal desires, and sensual Appetite.

And indeed about this time, *viz.* about the year 390. after Christ, these Exercises began to be almost universal; In *Egypt* especially men used such severities upon themselves, that we that never tryed them, would scarce believe, that ever there were such men, or that they did those mighty things which are recorded in History: Soon after these times, Men that used these Austerities began to sink by little and little; into an Opinion of Merit, and to look upon these Works

as Meritorious of Gods favour, and acceptance, not onely for themselves, but for others too, which fancy spoiled the whole Design, and made that a Sacrifice of Fools, which used with Humility and low Conceits of themselves, would have passed for excellent Devotion, and under this Character of Merit, and satisfaction, the Church of *Rome* retains some of these severities at this day, which made our Church at the first Reformation abolish the use, yet not so, as to forbid Christians the moderate use of them.

The *Grecian, Aethiopian, Armenian, and Coptick Churches* in the *East* do also preserve them still, but much as the *Papists*, they use them as compensations to God for the sins they live in, which makes the oblation odious.

The greatest severities among Christians in this Age, seem to be those which are used in *Egypt* by Men of the Order of (a) Present State of Egypt, p. (a) St. Anthony, and the *Carthusians* among 181, 182, the Papists; As to the former, their Rule obliges them not onely to renounce Matrimony for ever, but to possess no Estate, to dwell in the Wilderness, to be cloath'd with Wool, to be girt with a Leathern Girdle, to eat no Flesh, nor drink Wine, except great necessity compel them, to

spend their time in Prayer, and Worshipping of God, and having their Minds always running upon God, Reading the Scriptures, sleeping upon a Mat, or on the Earth, not to take off their Cloaths, to prostrate themselves 150 times a day, which they call making so many (b) Repentances. Some that are counted holier than the rest prostrate themselves on their Faces, and Bellies, with their Arms a-cross three hundred times every night, before they go to sleep.

And in imitation of these, the (c) *Carthusians* among the Papists wear Hair-cloth next to their Skin, eate no Flesh at all, no not in Sicknes, or extream Necesity, eate no Fish neither, but what is freely beslow'd upon them, eate Bread with the Bran in it, never speak to one another, never stir out of their own Colledge, except the President, and the Carterer, and live for the most part upon Bread, and Water, and Colworts, and Pease, and Beans, &c. eate but once a day, and all their employmēt is Reading, Writing, Praying, and Labouring. But that which renders both the severity of <sup>100 vii</sup> ces and prostrations Three hundred times every day, *Ricaut of the Greek Church*, c. 11. (c) Vid. *Sar de vit. SS. tom. 5. & Holpin. de orig. Mon. lib. 5. c. 7.*

the

the former, and the austeries of the latter insignificant in the sight of God, is, that the former are forced to do, what they do, and the latter hope to merit Heaven for themselves and others by it, and both lay a greater stress upon these outward severities, than upon the inward frame, and disposition of the heart.

So that these outward severities are like a narrow Bridge, over which a man must walk with very great cautiousness and circumspection, for there is danger both on the right and left hand, and he that doth not carefully look to his steps, may fall, and while he flatters himself with hopes of Heaven, exclude himself from it.

To direct my Reader in this point, and to acquaint him with the limits of this Exercise, how far these severities may be lawful, and in what cases expedient, and wholesome, and practicable, I shall lay down these following Rules, and Observations.

I. Whenever they are used, all opinion of Merit must be laid aside. Merit is nonsense in Divinity, and though the word occurs frequently in ancient Writers; yet it's plain to any judicious

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cious Reader , that they meant by Meriting no more, but obtaining, or getting what God hath promised. Since we must allow, and confess, that we are Creatures, the greatest holiness and strictness imaginable, can never come under that notion strictly taken ; for the distance betwixt the Creator, and the Creature is infinite, and Man by being a Creature , owes himself and all he hath, and all he can do to the Creator ; and the mercy of being Created, or receiving a Being from nothing, and being continually preserv'd (not to mention the vast Work of Redemption , and the innumerable other Blessings God hath both promised , and conferr'd on Man ) is so stupendous a Condescension, and a Bounty so astonishing, that it's impossible any Creature should deserve any thing at the Creators Hands. The Angels themselves that sin not, cannot deserve any favour from him, for being Creatures, all they do is nothing but Duty, and is no more but what God may justly expect from them , as their Maker, and Conservator, as much as a Master may challenge his Servants industry. *Doth he thank that Servant, because he did the things that were commanded him ? I trow not, so likewise ye, when*

*ye have done all, that ye are commanded to do, say we are unprofitable Servants, we have done that, which was our duty to do,* faith Christ most truly, *Luke 17. 9, 10.*

And if you reply here, that these severities are not things commanded, and therefore being free-will Offerings, over and above what is commanded, it's just, they should deserve more than ordinary favour at God's hands, I answer, that though I cannot say, that they are nowhere commanded, yet let's suppose they are not, still these severities in themselves are not at all acceptable to God, but onely as they are accompanied with other Duties, that are expressly commanded, without which God looks upon them no more, than on a Butchers killing of an Ox or Sheep, and being only Appendixes to such Duties, as are expressly commanded, and not acceptable but for those Duties, as will appear more in the sequel, they cannot be supposed to be so considerable as to Merit; Nay should a Man use the greatest severities, that were ever used by Men, and should he exceed all Mankind in such austeries, even the *Indian Brahmanes*, and put himself voluntarily to the greatest Pain and Tortures imaginable for

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for a thousand years together, the severity, which at the best is but finite, and attended with regrets, and imperfections could never deserve a Glory infinite, perfect, and eternal, for in merit there must be an equality, or parity between the Work, and the Reward, and no man can be said to deserve that, for which he takes not proportionable pains. And therefore he that thinks to merit Heaven by such severities, affronts the Almighty, and merits Hell, and Everlasting Fire.

*Hieron. de S. Fide lib. 2. c. 2.* That Jew was certainly distracted (*Simeon Ben Jochai* was his name) that boasted, he had so well deserved at the hands of God, by his Righteousness and severity of Life, that if he had been so minded, he could have Redeemed all the Men and Women that should be born after him, from the everlasting Wrath of God; and if his Son *Eleazer* should but joyn the Merits of his Righteousness with his, they might go near to save the whole World from being condemned in the last day. This is *Bedlam-talk*, and yet it were to be wish'd, that the Church of *Rome* did not participate of this madness, when they talk of the Treasury of their Church, the Merits of their Saints, and their Works of Super-errogation, where-

whereby they free many Souls out of Purgatory ; and how such a wicked man wrapt up in a Monks Habit at his Death, hath been immediately transported into Heaven, &c. One would admire, how men in their Wits can talk at this Rate, but that I see even *David* could feign himself mad at the Court of *Achish* for his Interest, and then no marvel, if these Men, finding what grift this Doctrine of Merits brings to their Mill , venture to be extravagant in their expressions concerning it.

II. Whenever these severities are used, they must not be used to give God satisfaction for the sins we have committed. To give God satisfaction by any thing, but the Cross and Death of Christ, is an expression which should sound harsh in a Christians Ear, and be banish'd from the confines of Divinity. Here the Church of *Rome* exceeds , and deviates again from the Primitive Rule, and while they look upon these severities as satisfactions given to God for the guilt of the temporal punishment, that remains after remission of sins, they seem to follow no Rule but that of their own fancy ; for the Scripture is a Stranger to this notion of satisfaction , and though *David* and other

Bellar. de  
penit. lib.  
4. c. 7.

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other Saints, have used these severities, yet we never read , that they intended them, as satisfactions to God, whom they had offended, but had other ends in them, such as we shall name , as we go along ; It's not to be denied, but that the Fathers use the word satisfaction often, when they discourse of such mortifications, but by those satisfactions they do not mean satisfactions given to an offended God , but to the Church , and the people of God, as signs, whereby our fellow-Christians may conclude, that our Repentance is real, and free from Hypocrisie.

Nor, III. Must they be used, in hopes, that God will dispence with our sins for the future, much les, that he will pass by those that we have committed, without sincere repentance, meerly for these severities : Alas ! it's easier to punish the Body, than to leave a sin ; and while the Sinner can enjoy his Lusts, what need he care, if for a day or two he is a little rigid and unkind to his Flesh, that unkindness will quickly wear out again, and the body fitted for commission of new offences. God doth not value these severities at this rate ; a penitent heart is more pleasing to him than a thousand Lashes, and a Soul that grieves for offending a

Gra-

Gracious God, looks lovelier in his eyes, than a bloody Side , or the imaginary Wounds of St. *Francis*. He that thinks that God will let him sin, because he whipt himself on such a day, takes God Vid. Bonav. Legend. Franc. c. for some Heathen Deity ; and indeed to lay a greater stress upon afflicting the <sup>13.</sup> Body, then upon forsaking of sin, is to contradict that notion, the Holy Ghost delivers of God, that he must be *worship'd* Joh. 4. 24. *in spirit and in truth.*

Nor, IV. Must they be used with an unwilling mind , where the inward repentance of the Soul makes the Will resolute in the use of them, they may pass for excellent Offerings, but being performed by force, or meerly because a Superior commands them, this evacuates the vertue of the affliction. Hence those among the Papists , that either suffer themselves to be hired to perform the Ceremony of Self-affliction on Good-Friday , or being once engaged in such an Order, use them not out of any sense of Sin within, but because the rule of their Order doth oblige them to it , whatever Conceits they may entertain of the *Opus operatum*, or Work it self , God still looking to the Spring from which all these Mortifications flow, they prevail no more,

*Aest. lib. 5.* more, than the Indians going to Church, meerly because their Masters force them, prevail with him, to send his Spirit into their Hearts, crying *Abba Father.*

Nor, V. Is it fit, that weak or sickly persons should use them. Though many Christians in the Primitive Times, would thus afflict themselves, notwithstanding their bodily infirmities ; yet we find, *1 Tim. 5. 23.* that in these cases men must use moderation. The Body being disabled, I do not see how the Soul can perform those noble Operations, she is otherwise capable of, no more than a Workman, whose tools are nought, can promise you an excellent piece of Manufacture. The Body is a Servant of the Soul, and we know, if our Servants be out of order, our Work must be left undone. Strong and healthy Bodies will bear it better, and if they lose something of their florid complexion, there is no great hurt done. Mortification to some Bodies would be a preservative of health, and such voluntary afflictions would spend many of those superfluous humours, that disorder them. In all these severities, men must be their own Physicians, and consider what their Bodies are able to bear, and what they are not.

not. And yet laziness and softness of life, and love to Carnal ease, must not make us pretend, that our Bodies will not bear them ; This is best known after we have had experience , and when we foresee a signal danger, it will then be time to forbear them. Our Bodies are able to endure a great deal more , than we are willing to believe, and the reason, why people are weary of any thing, that's irksome to Flesh and Bloud , is because they lie buried in Lust, and Sensuality. He that is weak already , had not need make himself weaker than he is, and Sickness is for the present, severity enough to subdue in us all disorderly Affections, and in these cases, it's infallibly true, what the Apostle saith , that *bodily exercise profits little,* 1 Tim. 4. 8.

And as these severities are not fit to be used by sickly and weakly persons, so neither must they be used by the Strong to the disservice of their Souls. In a word, the Body must not be used so coarsly , as to make it useless to the Soul ; and therefore the Saints of old observ'd most truly, that our Bodies are like Garments, if you take care of them, they will last a great while ; but if they be totally neglected, they will wear out in a very

very short time ; to mortifie the Body is one thing, to kill it is another, and he that would not be guilty of Self-murder, must not be too lavish in these severities. It was a good Answer of St. *Anthony* the Hermit to a Huntsman that had taken notice of his former austeries, and saw him laughing and merry with his Brethren that came to see him , and was scandalized at it ; *Bend thy Bow*, saith he, he did so ; *Bend it more* ; he obey'd him ; *Bend it yet more*. *No*, answered the Huntsman, *then it will break*. *Just so*,

*Vid. Pelag. lib. 10. de Discrit.* *saith he, is it with these severities, too much of them spoils all, but the moderate use of them may preserve both Soul and Body to Eternity.*

I do not believe it was possible without a Miracle , for *Besarion* to stand forty nights in a Hedge of Thorns, that continually prick'd him, though some do confidently report it, and if he did so, I do not see of what use his Body could be to his Soul after such Torments. Nor do I know

*Vid. Dionys. Exig. in vit. Pat. bom. c. 50.* what to say to that man in *Dionysius*, that being at Prayer, and a Scorpion biting him, and shedding Poyson into his Foot, insomuch that it swell'd immediately, pain'd him exceedingly, and convey'd the infection to his very Heart , yet would not

not move from his place , nor take care to resist the noxious Animal, till he had done his Prayer ; for though he was restored to his former Health by the Prayer of *Pachomius* , yet no rational Man, can think well of such severities, where men may prevent their death, and will not, and I know not, whether it be not tempting of God , rather than trusting him, where he hath put the means to save our lives into our hands, and we neglect them.

Nor, VI. Must the stress of Repentance be laid on these severities. This I have already touched upon, and I cannot but mention it again , because without great care and watchfulness men are apt to be deluded by the Devil into misconstruction of this Exercise, as if God were more pleased with this Exercise, than with the Repentance. Men may possibly be pleased with these outward Austerities more than with inward Reformation, but God, who sees further, cannot. His piercing eye looks through the Bowels , and if the Root be sound, loves all the Branches that spring from it , if the Foundation be good, casts a favourable Eye on all the Ornaments of the Structure ; This Root , this Foundation

is a sincere Repentance, or a Heart enamour'd with the Beauty of Holiness. If this Rod buds and blossoms, and bears such Fruitt, it is accepted in *Christ Jesus*; without a contrite Heart severities are but a deceitful Bush, whereby Men are deceived into a good opinion, that there is excellent Wine to be found in the House, but find nothing but Gall, and Vinegar, a stately Gate to a Swine-stye, and paint laid on upon a homely Face, which makes the Mortification ridiculous. And therefore,

VII. These severities must be onely demonstrations of the sincerity of our Repentance, when they are used, they must be used to convince our selves, and others, that we do in good earnest abhor the sins, we have been guilty of. When our Hearts grieve for the provocations we have given to the Almighty, and temptations come in, and our frightened Consciences would make us believe, that our sorrow is but counterfeit; there is no better way to dash, and beat back the despairing suggestion, than by offering some violence to our Bodies; for being naturally lovers of ease and softness, when we can thus deny our selves, and can be reveng'd for our sins upon our selves, we give

give very good evidence, that what we profess is real, and that our Tears are flowing from a Heart sensible of the Majesty, and Purity of the Great Creator. And this was the reason, why the noble *Fabiola*, repenting of her being married <sup>Vid Hist.</sup> to another Husband, while the former, <sup>ton. Epist.</sup> <sup>30.</sup> from whom she had been divorced, was living, came into the Church with her Hair dishevell'd, with her Hands, and Neck, and Lips all dirty, and bemired with lying in Dust and Ashes for some time; and for this St. Jerome commends her highly, because hereby she discover'd the reality, and sincerity of her Repentance.

VIII. These severities are of great use in our endeavours to despise the World, and to lead a truly Spiritual Life. Indeed our love of the World hath need of violent corrosives. It's a Distemper which is not to be dispell'd by flattery, nor is it cured by a few angry words, such as *Eli* gave his two Sons *Hophni* and *Phinees*. Without it be corrected, and lash'd, the Weed will over-ran the Ground, and endanger the Soul even in the midst of ordinary Devotion. The Body is ever a Bosome-friend to this love of the World, and therefore if the

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Body be proceeded against with harshness, this love feels the smart, and begins to abate in its Grandeur and loftiness. The Body being put to pain, its satisfactions grow faint, and it begins to lower its Topsails, and to dwindle away into nothing; such Mustard being laid on these Breasts, the Child soon gets an aversion from sucking them, and this bitterness drives the Soul to seek for sweeter objects in Heaven. And upon this account it was, that *Sylvanus* the Bishop of *Philippopolis* went always in Sandals made of Hay, even in  
Vid. So-  
crat.lib. 7.  
e. 36.  
*Ammian.*  
*Marcellin.*  
lib. 27.

the City of *Constantinople*; and the rural Bishops in the Diocese of *Rome*, denied themselves of all worldly Retinue and Splendour, while those of *Rome* lived in all the pomp and bravery the world could afford.

IX. Either to subdue a corruption, or to prevent yielding to a sin, these severities may be very helpful. Such severities fright away the corruption, and make *Satan* himself stand amazed at what we are going to do. Seeing the love of God so strong in us, that for his sake we can put our selves to great inconveniences, he departs, and finding that Gods favour is dearer to us, than our ease and interest, his next conclusion is, that he must

must find out other Subjects to impose, and Work upon. When *Hilarion* applied himself to the subduing of his Lusts, he spake to his Body, *Come thou Beast,* Vid. *Hil-*  
*I will not feed thee with Barley, but with Hilarion.*  
*Chaff;* I'll so order thee, that thou shalt not kick; I'll subdue thee with the hunger, and thirst; I'll lay Weight upon thee; I'll afflict thee by Heats, and Colds, that thou shalt long for *Victuals* more than for Lustful Objects. And so he did, labouring hard, when the Sun shin'd hottest; and praying and singing all the while he was at Work; and thus he became Master of his Passions. In the same manner *Zenon* travelling one day through *Pale-* Ruffin. vit.  
stina, and seeing a Bed of excellent Cu-  
sen. lib. 3.  
c. 7. cumbers, a Fruit he naturally loved, and finding temptations in his Breast to steal some from the Owner, it came into his Mind, that Thieves, when taken by the Magistrate, are usually tormented, *I must therefore, saith he, try whether I can endure Torments before I steal;* and accordingly he laid this punishment upon himself for coveting another mans Goods, and stood five days in the Sun frying his Body in the intolerable heat; and being able to endure it no longer, *I see,* saith he, *I must not steal, for I cannot en-*

dure Torments ; and so he passed on without gratifying his desires.

X. If you ask me, what severities are fit to be used upon such occasions, I must answer, that it is impossible to prescribe to all men the same severities, for their Bodies, Constitutions, Tempers, and Inclinations are different, and consequently that, which may do well with one, may not be so proper for another ; I will therefore set down some examples, and leave it to them, that think it expedient to make use of these Exercises to choose, such, as they find least injurious to their Constitution. I have read of a Holy Man in *Egypt*, who being tempted by a Harlot to acts of Uncleanness, and feeling the temptation work, lighted a Candle, and burnt his Fingers one by one, till by the smart and pain of his Flesh, he forgot all thoughts of impurity. One *Nathyra* being taken out of an obscure Hermitage, where he lived poorly and abstemiously, and mortified himself to a very great degree, and made Bishop, lived now more severely than ever, lay harder, and denied himself more than he did when he was in his solitary condition, Because, said he, I am now under greater temptations. *Pachomius* wore Hair-cloth next to his skin,

*Moscb.  
prat. Spi-  
rit. c.24.*

some-

sometimes to keep his Body under. One in *Cuziba*, if he heard of any poor man, that had not wherewithal to buy Corn, to sow his Ground, would go, and without the Poor mans knowledge buy some, and sow it for him ; sometimes he would take Bread and Water with him , and sit in the High-way that is between *Jordan* and *Jerusalem*, and thereby relieve needy Travellers : Where he saw men carry great Burdens upon their Backs, when they came to a Hill, he would help them to carry them up the Hill ; sometimes would carry up their Children ; if he met with any that was naked, he would give him his Cloak, and if he found any that was dead by the way, he would go and bury him, with Psalms, and Prayers. Se-  
*Heracild.*  
*rapion* fold himself, and became a Servant <sup>parad. c.</sup> <sup>24</sup> <sup>Gregor.</sup> <sup>Dialog. lib.</sup> <sup>3. c. 1.</sup> on purpose , that he might have an opportunity to convert the Sinner , he fold himself too , much like Bishop *Paulinus*, who Pawn'd himself for a poor Widows Son, and went into Captivity, to deliver him out of it. St. *James* the Apostle, saith St. *Chrysostome*, pray'd not with a Cushion under him, but with his bare knees so fixed to the ground , that they became like Camels Hoofs, hard, and insensible. Others when any Lustful

thought came upon them , would take some great Burden upon their Shoulders, and carry it up and down till they were quite spent. Others that have been single men, as Christ advised, that young man, *Mat. 19. 21.* have sold all they had, and given it to the Poor. Others, as *Christ* enjoyns, *Mat. 5. 39.* have, according to the Letter , turn'd their left Cheek to him , that hath smote him on the right, and haue gone two miles with him, that would have compell'd them to go one ; others, as the Apostles did, *1 Cor. 4. 12,* *13.* when they were reviled, they blessed, when they were defamed, they entreated ; others, when they have found a regret upon their Spirits, that they had given away too much to the Poor , have gone back, and doubled the Sum they had given away , on purpose to cross the evil motion, as it is said of the famous Author of the Book of Martyrs ; others have parted with their dearest Profit , which they have believed was unjustly gotten though they became Beggars by it ; others have put their Flesh to pain with Iron Pricks , Nettles, and Thorns, that they might not think of that sin , they were prompted to ; others have sold their Coaches, and rich Laces, and Ornaments, and

and learn'd to go on foot, and in plain Garments, that they might be able to do more good in this present World ; others have stinted themselves in their Diet, and either eaten onely of one dish, or have eaten no Meat at all, but Herbs, and Roots of the Earth , as I shew'd in the beginning of this Discourse ; others have punish'd themselves with some days silence, for speaking things which were not convenient, &c. These various examples , I mention, not because I think they require imitation in every particular , but to shew, how he that means to be Master of the same Virtues, or intends to prevent, and subdue the same Sins, that these men mortified, may some such way arrive to the same Felicity, and Victory.

XI. Whenever any of these severities are used, they must be used with great humility; To grow proud upon the use of them, is to pervert their design, and to fall into a high opinion of our own Holiness , is to wound Religion with her own Sword ; I must not despise others , that use them not, nor think that I am the better man, because my Neighbour is not acquainted with these Mysteries. My sins may require that, which another may not, and if I do excel him in this point, he may over-

over-top me in another. These rigors must be carried on with secrecy , and I must not be ambitious to let other men know, what I do in private , that they may admire me. I may indeed speak of them , where I can edifie my Fellow-Christian by them , but must not therefore think the worse of my Brother , because he will not do as I do. I must always think very low of my self, and believe that I have need of such Plasters, which others , that are more Righteous than I, may omit, and yet be in a safe condition.

XII. Discretion must be the great guide in these severities, so I said in the beginning , and this is it that must govern this Chariot, else with *Phaeton* , it will set the course of nature on fire; where this Light hath been wanting, Men have fallen into Pits and Ditches, from which they have been pull'd out with great difficulty, and sometimes have perish'd in them. Discretion must take care, that all these Rules I have mentioned be observed; if this Watchman falls asleep , the City may soon be taken by the Enemy. These Severities are like chymical Medicines, as they may do great good, if skilfully applied , so they may do

do much harm, if made use of by an ignorant Practitioner ; Antiquity gives us an account of several inconveniences men have run into for want of discretion. Some have been perswaded into so high a conceit of their holiness, that they have expected Miracles ; others have been deluded into an opinion, that they were impeccable, and by that means have been exposed to great Falls, and Errours. Discretion, whether our own, or some faithful Ministers, will teach a man to hold an even course, and to avoid the Rocks that are on both sides of him, and the Vessel thus guided, may bring us safe to the everlasting Harbour.

And now, I must say to those, that read these Lines, as Christ said to his Disciples in the point of abstaining from Marriage, *Mat. 19. 12.* He that is able to receive it, let him receive it ; I cannot and dare not presl these severities as absolutely necessary ; yet thus much I will be bold to tell you, that the Saints of old thought Heaven could not be had without them. They verily believed, that there must be a conformity to Christ, not only in active obedience, but in sufferings too ; and where God did send no affliction upon them, they thought themselves

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selves obliged to inflict some on themselves ; This produced that vast number of Virgins. wherein the Church then triumph'd; By Hair-cloth and Sackcloth, and denying their Bodies, even Necessaries, by mean Attire, and carelessness in their Dress, and deforming themselves, and going bare-foot and enduring heat, cold, hunger, thirst, and nakedness, they became Conquerours of their Lusts, and Spectacles to Angels and to Men. Alas! you that at this day call your selves Christians, and are fond of all the bravery, that the Silkworm and the curious hand can make, (to the Female Sex I speak particularly) that must have such Washes for your Skin, such Paint for your Cheeks, such Patches for your Faces, and go from one Glass to another to see whether this Curl is in its exact Figure, whether this Lace fits well, whether this Meen becomes you, or whether you are entirely Modish, that keep such a stir with your Fans, and Instruments of Pride in publick Prayers, are more afraid to hurt your Knees, than your Souls, and more discomposed, if justled, than if you lost Gods favour, and practice no more Religion, than is just consistent with your Lusts, that are more concerned, if your Hoods

Hoods and lighter Vails, and flowing Mantles do but fit amiss, than if we thunder out Gods Judgements against you, that must serve God with ease, and elbow-room, are discomposed and disordered with every trifle, and as soon as the Lords day is over, go from one Play-houfe to another, and know not which way to look for Starchedness and Wantonness, and exactly obſerve the mode and figure of your Gate, and conform accurately to the vain gesture the Dancing-Master taught you, and are careful about nothing ſo much, as about being dressed A-la-mode, and whose Discourses chiefly are about Fashions and Fineries: Alas! Had you lived in the Primitive times, there is no man would have taken you for Christians. The Primitive Saints would have reckon'd you may be among the *Gnosticks*, or among the better ſort of Heathens, but they would have won-dred at your impudence, if you had called your ſelves Christians; for they looke upon all thoſe Gaudes that now you doat on, as part of that Pomp and Glory of the world, which they had abjured in Baptiſm. How you come to be Christians in this Age, Heaven knows, I am afraid you are none of Gods making.

The

The Primitive Saints were such Enemies to all Vanity, that they would scarce allow the Female Sex any Looking-Glasses to behold their Faces in , which made some of them make use of Vessels of Oyl to behold themselves; and they took none to be Christians that did not conform in Habit, and Dres, and Behaviour to Christ , as well as in Doctrine. *Tertullian* makes himself very merry with those that pretended to be Christians, and call'd for such a Bodkin to dress their hair, and the Blushes of such a Paper to beautifie their Faces, and fasted with delicate Wines, as persons whose Religion could not be treated of, but with Jest and Moc-kery.

The Christians in those days liv'd like people that had not their Portion in this life; their Pomp lay all in Holiness, and all their bravery in making their Souls rich and beautiful, and indeed where so much cost, and time, and Pains, is bestowed upon dressing the outward Man , the inward commonly goes like a Beggar, or lies unregarded ; where their condition and dignity required difference in Cloathing, they wore may be Sackcloth next to their skin, to remember, that though they were in the world,yet they were not of the world.                              The

The Age we live in will not bear these severities, Mens Lusts have made that necessary, which heretofore would scarce have been thought convenient, so strangely is Religion altered from what it was; and let no man tell me here, that to Preach up Severities, is to teach People to turn Heathens again; for the Priests of *Baal cut themselves with Knives and Lancers, till the Bloud gush'd out upon them,* 1 Reg. 18. 28. we urge no such severities, as shall disable the Body from doing the Work, that's proper for it, nor do we look upon God as a Tyrant, or a Deity, that delights in Bloud, as those Heathens did, much less do we think that any such severities merit God's favour, or his Audience, as they did; no, the severities which we recommend to Christians are such as the Primitive Fathers used, severities, which nothing but love to God produces, and a hatred of Sin, and a willingness to be rid of those Lusts and Temptations which do so easily beset us.

Nor is this to reduce men to Popery; for I have already shew'd how the Papists do abuse these rigors, and pointed at the Rocks that must be shunn'd: In matters of these Bodily Severities, the Papists have

have not forg'd a new Doctrine, but have only turned an old Doctrine into Superstition, and run it into excess and extravagance, which bitter rind being pared away, the Fruit may be wholesome, and like the Leaves of the Tree of Life for the healing of the Nations.

Rev. 22.2.

In vain doth the slothful sinner plead, that God commands no such severities; I believe, if he look'd into the Bible with seriousness, and attention, he would find more Commands, that urge these severities, than he is aware of. The 5th and 19th Chapters of St. *Matthew*, the 6th of St. *Luke*, and the 12th of the *Romans*, diligently considered, will convince a rational Man, that the Holy Ghost is no enemy to these severities; and suppose there were no express Commands for it, as long as we have so many examples of Saints before us, that have used them, and as long as we are commanded to imitate those that have gone before us in their holiness, these examples will not want much of the nature of peremptory Commands.

But it's very common with Men, that are for an easie Religion, to find out excuses. No wonder, if Men whose God is their Belly, whose Glory is their Shame, and

and who mind earthly things , speak against these severities. It's their interest to talk against them, and they would be undone, if their Guts should want those soft Morsels ; they used to feed upon : Their Lusts tremble at these rigors, and therefore they must be unlawful. Nothing is Religion with them that crosses their sensual Appetite , though in good truth Christianity is nothing else but crossing our sensual Appetite. It's true, no man yet hated his own Flesh , but still these severities are no signs of mens hating their own Flesh, but certain marks, that a man loves his own Flesh, and that he is willing to save his Soul and Body in the day of our Lord Jesus. Without doubt he loves himself most, that denies himself most, and no man believes a Heaven and a Reward to come, like him, that will not allow himself the comforts and ease of sensual pleasures here ; such a man shews that he is not of this World, but that he is chosen out of the World , and hath laid up his Treasure in another. Our blessed Redeemer, that commanded Sea and Earth, might certainly have lived better, and more to his ease , if he had been minded to do so, than he did ; he that bid *Peter* take up a Fish out of

the Sea, and told him , he should' find a piece of Money in the Fish, might as well have commanded all the Riches in the Sea, and bid his Disciples take them up, as they had occasion ; but no, he chose an humble , despicable, self denying Life, to shew , that thus his Followers must do, for the Glory, which is set before them ; and because he made himself of no Reputation , and took upon him the form of a Servant, therefore God did highly exalt him, and gave him a Name above every Name; that at the Name of *Jesus* every Knee should bow: I am not ignorant that Christ did many things suitable to the great design he came for, and for our sake became Poor, that we might be rich; but still Christs life is exemplary, as well as expiatory , and though we cannot imitate him in his extraordinary Fast and Miracles,yet the Apostles seem every where to intimate,that if we mean to inherit the Glory he entred into, we must do what he did, meaning what is possible for us to follow him in ; his steps we are to tread, and accordingly the Primitive Christians we find did imitate him in most of his Self-denials, things for which we do admire them, yet cannot find in our hearts to follow them.

We

We live, as if there were no other World, and whatever there may be within, there appears little without to convince a Spectator that we seek another Life. Our greediness, after the Comforts of this Life, discovers how little we believe a future Recompence, and there appears so little in our lives that looks like labouring after a future Happiness, that one would think we believe not one word of the Bible. We are most concern'd for a livelihood, and instead of seeking first God's Kingdom, and its Righteousness, the first thing we seek, is to get an Estate, and a comfortable subsistence, and then we may take up a little more Devotion than formerly we did. This is it, we would fain live plentifully and bravely here, and enter upon a more plentiful and glorious Estate hereafter; whereas the Scripture seems to make this World, and that to come, things opposite and contrary, and the ways of living in order to the enjoyment of these two totally different; and it was the belief of Christians in the purer Ages, that it was impossible to Reign with Christ hereafter, without suffering with him here, and none of them thought of living with Christ in Heaven, except they

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died

died with him here on Earth, *i. e.* died to the needless Comforts and Pleasures of this Life, and lived like men of another Country. They gathered so much from Christ's saying, *Luke 6. 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25.* *Wo unto you, that are Rich, for ye have receiv'd your Consolation; Wo unto you that are full, for ye shall hunger; Wo unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep; Blessed be ye Poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God; Blessed are ye that hunger now, for ye shall be fill'd; Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh.* Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving Kindnesses of the Lord. I cannot but mention here St. Austin's words in his *Manual.* O my Soul, were we to endure Torments for some years day by day; were we to suffer the Pains of Hell-Fire for a considerable time, in order to see Christ Jesus in his Glory, and to be joyned to the Blessed Society of Triumphant Saints; Were it not worth suffering all this to be partakers of so great, so vast, so stupendous a Glory? Come on then, let Devils prepare their Temptations, and make their Arrows sharp against me; let my Body be broke through Fasting; let Sackcloth press my Flesh; let great labours bur-

Vid. Ang.  
Manual.  
c. 15.

burthen my outward Man ; let frequent Watchings dry up my moisture ; let this Man clamour against me ; let another molest me ; let Cold and Frost bow me down ; let my Heart grumble ; let the Heat burn me ; let my Head ache ; let my Breast burn ; let my Stomach be full of Wind ; let my Face grow pale ; let me be weak all over ; let my Life be consumed with Grief , and my Tears with Mourning ; let Rottenness enter into my Bones, and under me let Worms and Maggots crawl. None of these things shall move me, neither count I my life dear, so I may but gain rest in the day of Visitation, and ascend to converse with the People prepared for the Lord. For O ! what Glory will the Saints possess there ! How great will be their Joy, when they shall shine as the Sun in the Firmament ! When God shall number his People and advance them according to the several degrees of their Goodness and Holiness, and shall reward them according to their Righteousness, when he shall give them for Temporal, Cœlestial things, for Trifles they have lost for him, great and ample Treasures ! Behold what an accumulation of Happiness it will be, when the Lord shall lead his Saints to take a view of his Fathers Glory, and make them sit down with him in Heavenly Places that God may be all in all.

Thus spoke the Christian Father, and what he spoke he practised; And lest any of us after all that hath been said, should use tergiversations, and make Excuses and Apologies for his neglect, I shall conclude all with a direction out of Maimonides. *How shall a man arrive, Hilcoth Deoth c. 1. sect 7.* *Habit of them, and to get this Habit, he must fall to work and exercise himself, and do it the second and the third time, as he doth in lesser Virtues. He must continually return to his task, till it become easie to him, and the Toil and Weariness of it vanish, and these Virtues become one with his Soul.*

**F I N I S.**

A  
LETTER  
TO A  
PERSON  
OF  
Quality,

Concerning the  
HEAVENLY LIVES  
OF THE  
Primitive Christians.

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## LETTER

TO A

*Person of Quality, &c.*

SIR,

**T**HE great Sence you have of the Narrowness of the Way, and the Straitness of the Gate, which leads to Life, hath made you very often importunate with me to give you an Account of a little Book, which *Fronto* the Learned *Canon of Paris* Writ, *Concerning the Heavenly Lives of the Primitive Christians*; not but that there is a larger and better Account given of that Subject by a late Writer

*A Letter to a*

Writer of our Church ; but, because you hoped , the smallness of the Treatise might be a temptation to Readers to peruse it , who oftentimes are frightened with the bulk, and vastness of the Volume. I have at last obey'd your Commands ; and though what I have done is not so much a Translation, as a Paraphrase ; and the Liberty I have taken to reselect some things, that were needless , and to add here and there some passages out of ancient Authors, as were proper and necessary, seem to be bold, and unusual ; yet, as it is, you have it ; and I was the more willing to let it go abroad in company of this Book, because it may serve to illustrate some passages in the Exercises I have been describing.

It is in a manner impossible to consider the first beginning and original of the Church, and to reflect on

on the Cradle, as it were, and Swaddling Cloaths of that Body whereof we are Members ; without speaking something like Paradoxes, and Mysteries. The first Christians, though newly Born, yet there is nothing to be seen in them that's any way Childish , or so mean as to offend a Judicious Eye or unworthy the esteem and approbation of the gravest Philosopher ; and the Church in that Age, though an Infant, yet from it's Birth , was so lusty and vigorous, that though like *Hercules* it never crush'd Snakes and Vipers in its Cradle, yet its Attempts and Enterprizes were more Masculine ; for it conquer'd Tygers, Lions, and what is worse, Fire and Flames, and the sharpest Torments. It knew nothing of the infirmities , and weaknesses of a tender Age , but did in its Youth things becoming the seriousness and sobriety of the oldest

oldest Men. And though its growth was prodigious, and its Merits encreased with its Years, yet even upon its first entring into the World, its bigness and vastness seemed to vie with that of the Earth , for it introduced a new World into the Universe.

Such was the Beginning , and first Institution of the Christian Church ; that in it we find Men , who voluntarily became little Children , Children who in Wisdom exceed Patriarchs, Virgins, who had the Prudence and Gravity of Matrons, and Matrons endowed with Virginal Modesty , and Chastity. Men of gray Hairs, and old in Years, but Children in Malice, Pride, and Ambition; and it was hard to say, which were the Old , and which the Young Disciples , for the younger sort strove to equal; if not exceed the elder in Devotion.

Holi-

Holineses was their Ornament, and Men were counted Great, as they arriv'd to high Degrees of Piety, and the more Religious any Man was, the greater Majesty, and Respect he was thought worthy of.

The Light they came attended withal fill'd the World, as the Sun doth the Universe, which comes forth from its Eastern Conclave, and presently diffuses, and spreads its Light over all the surface of our Hemisphere. So soon did the World feel the influences, and operations of these new Stars, and were forced to acknowledge their Divine Power and Virtue; for they press'd through the *Chaos*, Mankind lay in, as Souls do pierce through Bodies, and the Life, Sense, and Understanding they taught them, was wholly New, so different from what was in the World before, that Men gaz'd at the Spectacle, and

and lost themselves in the Admira-  
tion.

What advantages the Soul can be supposed to give the Body, the same did the first Christians afford to the benighted World ; and whatever inconveniences the Body puts the Soul to, the same did the be-fuddled World bring upon the first Christians ; for as the Soul tenders the Bodies welfare, so did they the Worlds ; as the Soul directs the Body to do things rational, so did they the World ; as the Soul restrains the Body from doing mischief to it self, so did they the World ; and as the Soul makes the Members of the Body Instruments of Righteousness, so did they attempt to reform the deluded World into Holiness : On the other side, as the Body afflicteth the Soul, so did the World persecute those first Christians ; as the Body makes

makes the Soul live uneasie, so did they incommode these excellent Men ; as the Body puts ill Constructions on the actions and admonitions of the Soul, so the World did put the same on theirs , and as the Body seems to long for nothing so much, as the ruine of the Soul ; so the destruction of those Saints, was the great thing the world then did aim at.

Of such persons was this Church made up, who had not their original out of the Brain of *Jupiter*, as the Poets Fable of *Minerva* , but from the bloody and wounded Side of the Crucified *JESUS*. The Water and Bloud which flowed from those Wounds , was that which gave them being ; and though their Principle was Water, yet it had this Virtue , that it made them all fiery , and fill'd them with Zeal and holy Flames ; and

and as in the beginning of the Gospel, their Lord and Master was born of a Woman without a Man, so came they from a Man without a Woman, and the Miracle of their Birth was in a manner as great, as their Masters ; for the Holy Ghost that impregnated the Blessed Virgin, baptized them too , and the same Spirit , that raised the Mighty *JESUS* from his Grave, quickned their mortal Bodies , and transformed them into new Creatures.

They were a Commonwealth made up of Great and Low, of Rulers and Underlings, of Governours and Subjects ; and yet nothing was more hard, than to distinguish one from the other ; for whatever the difference might be, they esteemed one another equal, and by their carriage one would have concluded that they had been all of the same de-

degree and condition. Their *Pastors* and chief men were more known by their Munificence and Good Deeds, than by their Coats of Arms, or Splendour of their Offices.

They seemed to be all of the same Kindred; for the Aged they honoured as Fathers, and the Youths they tended as their Children. Those of the same Age call'd one another Brethren, and these were the names they gave one another; and in these Titles they gloried more, than men now-a-days do in the lofty Epithets of *Duke, Earl, Baron, Knight, or Gentleman.*

You might see amongst them abundance of Mothers that never had any Children, and Virgins took care of innocent Babes, as if they had been Mothers. No Family complained of barrenness or unfruitfulness, for they never wan-

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ted Children to provide for , and those that had none of their own, would be sure to find some to take care of. None wanted paternal Care, while so many Fathers studied to do good , and men were readier to Give, than others were to Ask, and seemed to be sorrowful if they had not Objects , upon which they might exercise a paternal Charity.

There was hardly a Widow among them , that complained of Solitariness, or sought comfort in a second Husband; and second Marriage was counted little better than Adultery. Their Widows were the same, that they were whilst their Husbands lived ; and finding that upon their Husbands death, they were become Sisters of many Brethren , they aimed at no other Contract, but that with Christ, who if they were found worthy,

worthy, would, as they thought, marry them at last to the Service of the Church, where they might exercise that Maternal Care to the Poor, and Needy, which formerly they used to express to their own Children. Here you should see none rejoicing, that he had any thing of his own; for whatever he had, he look'd upon his Fellow-Christians as Co-heirs, and was so well contented, that they should inherit with him, that he thought, that which he had, a Burthen, if his Neighbours were not to share in his Possessions. This present Life was the least thing they minded, while that to come, engrossed their Thoughts and Considerations. They were so entirely Christians, that in a manner they were nothing else, and cared not for being any thing else, lest if they should be something else, they should be suspected

of deviating from their Masters foot-steps.

Hence it was, that the *Pagans* accused them of Unrighteousness, and Unprofitableness , as if they were dead Weights in the World, contributing nothing to the welfare and prosperity of Mankind, and as if they stood for Cyphers in Humane Societies, though none were more ready to communicate of the Profit of their Labours to others than they , and did therefore on purpose keep close to their Calling and Profession , that they might be able to relieve the Needy. And though they were loath to take upon them the Employment of Magistrates, and Governors, lest the Emperors and Gods Commands should clash , and they lye under a temptation of obeying Man more than God ; yet , whenever they were thought worthy to bear Office

fice in the Church, they readily embraced the Charge, that they might be in a greater capacity to improve the Talents, God had given them, to his Glory, and his Peoples good, and were pleased with the Trouble of the Office, that the World might see, they had no design of Gain, or Worldly Interest in the Administration.

They spake little, but their Thoughts were always Great, and Heavenly; and as they look'd upon sublunary Objects, as too mean for their lofty Minds to rest on, so their care was to keep the Eyes of their Understandings fix'd on that World, which fades not away.

In the eye of the World, they were *Pythagoreans*, and a kind of Dumb-Men; but when they met one with the other, and *CHRIST* was named, perfect *Peripateticks*, and no *Philosophers* would be freer

in their Discourses than they. Their business was to live , not to talk great Matters ; and the name *Christian* did so charm them,that though there were various degrees of Men among them, Ecclesiasticks , Laymen, Virgins, Widows , Married Persons, Confessors, Martyrs , and Friends ; yet the name *Christian* swallowed up all , and in this they triumph'd beyond all other Titles in the World ; which made *Attalus* in *Eusebius* , when the Governor asked him , what Countryman he was , who his Father and Mother were, what Trade, Profession, and Employment he was of , whether he was Rich, or Poor, gave no other answer, but this, That he was a *Christian*. And the same did the excellent *Blandina*. And by this answer they gave the World to understand , that their Kindred, Pedigree , Nobility , Trade , Profession,

fession, Blood, &c. did all consist in this one Thing, and that beyond this, there could be no greater Honour and Dignity.

Their Communications or Answers in common Discourses were Yea, Yea, and Nay, Nay. An Oath they shunn'd as much as Perjury, and a Lye among them was more rare, than a Sea-monster is to the Inhabitants of a Continent; for they said, that in their Baptism they were signed with the Mark of Truth, and that they could not be Servants of the God of Truth, if they should yield but to the least appearance of Falshood.

Christ was the charming Word among them, and they heard nothing with greater joy, than that glorious Name. His Death and Sufferings rais'd their Souls, and his Crofs was more precious to them, than Rubies. Hereby they learned to

despise the World, and the Marrow, Virtue, and Efficacy of their Religion, was the Death of *JE-SUS.*

This Death they remembred, not only in the Sacrament, but at their common Meals, and when they refreshed their Bodies with Meat, and Drink, they talked of that Meat which would feed them into Everlasting Life; and herein they walked contrary to the custom of the Drunkards of old, who used to carry a Death's Head with them to their Drunken Meetings, and set it upon the Table, and with the sight of that, and remembrance of what they must shortly come to, encouraged themselves in Drunkenness. The first Christians remembred indeed the Death of *Christ* at their ordinary Tables, but it was, to make Pain, and Torment, and Death, and the Cross familiar to them,

them, for the Afflictions of this Life they looked upon, as the Midwives, that promoted their new Birth, and the best Companions of their Faith, and the faithfulest Nurses of their Hopes.

In the Cities and Towns where they lived, none was unknown to the other; for they Pray'd together, heard the Word together, met frequently at Meals together, and were continually helpful one to the other; Insomuch that wherever they met, they knew one another; and when they durst not with their Lips, yet with their Eyes and Gestures, they would salute one another, send Kisses of Peace one to another, rejoice in the common Hope, and if permitted, assist one another in Adversities. This is one of us, faith such a Saint, for we have seen him in our Oratories, we have Pray'd with him,

*A Letter to a*

him, we have been at the Lords Table together, we have heard the Scriptures read together, we have kneeled together, we have been instructed together. O happy Kinred ! which comes by Prayer, and Communion of the Body and Blood of *JESUS* ! O Blessed Relations! where Men are not called Brothers of the Sun of the Stars, as the ancient Tyrants stiled themselves, but Brethren of CHRIST, Children of GOD, and Citizens of Heaven !

When a Christian, who was a Stranger, came to them, before ever he shew'd his Testimonials, they knew him by his lean Visage, and meager Face, which his frequent Fasting had brought him to, by the Modesty of his Eyes, by the Gravity of his Speech, by his Gate, and Habit, and mortified Behaviour, for something Divine did shine through

through their looks, and one might read the Characters of the Spirit in their Countenance. Nor is it very strange, that a good Man should be known by his Carriage, for to this day, a serious Person, though he says nothing, something in his Lineaments, and Features, and Postures, will betray the inward Zeal, and Sincerity of his Soul, and his deportment will discover, there is something more than ordinary in him, as much as the *Roman Senator* was betray'd by the Perfumes about him.

Whenever they were thrust into the Croud of Malefactors, their Fellow-Christians soon guessed who they were, for they hastned with Meekness to their Martyrdom, and without expressing any impatience, or indignation, submitted their Necks to the stroak of the Axe, prepared for them. They used to look frequently up to Heaven, and one

one might by their smiles see that between God, and them, there was more than ordinary Correspondence. Sometimes they would provoke the Executioners to begin their Torments, and be earnest with the Hangman, not to delay their Agonies. Sometimes they would laugh at the Pain they suffer'd, and in the very jaws of Death betray a taste of Immortality. They looked upon Christianity, as a Religion, that taught them to suffer valiantly, and to them it was no other but a Science, to instruct Men to despise Riches, Honours, and Torments too, in order to Everlasting Glory.

Their Presidents, and Pastors, were known by no other Character, but that of Officiousness, and Charity, nor had their Shepherds any other mark to be distinguish'd by, but their willingness to advance the good of the Sheep, and their ready-

readiness unto every good Word and Work. And indeed so were the Christians in general known by their mutual Love, and kind Offices.

If any fell sick, the rest did cheerfully run to comfort him, and this Employment their Women were chiefly ambitious of, who seldom stirred out of their own Houses, but upon such occasions, and when they resorted to their Oratories. They were seen but rarely in the Streets, except such charitable Employments called them forth; for none denied her Neighbour her care, nor could any worldly Respects discourage them from that Officiousness.

If any were Rich, or Noble, they were the readier to express their compassion, and Women of the highest Descent were the forwardest to assist the Calamitous in their need;

need ; for Religion had mortifi'd  
in them all Punctilio's of Honour  
and State, and made them remem-  
ber that in Christ they were all  
equal. She in whose Veins the  
nobleſt Bloud did run, would say  
of her poor distressed Neighbor, she  
is my ſister, my fellow-Member, one  
that hath part with me in my Dear  
Redeemer. If ſhe be ancient, ſhe  
is my Mother, ſaid ſhe, if younger,  
ſhe is my Daughter ; nor were these  
expressions names of course onely,  
but they were written in their hearts,  
and their Lips ſpoke what their  
Minds believed, and these words  
were at once pronounced , and  
thought. Hence it was, that the  
greatest Ladies touch'd their poorer  
Neighbours Sores, bound up their  
Wounds, applied Plaifters to them,  
made their Beds and tended them,  
as the meanest Servants. Here you  
might ſee the industry of one, there  
the

the sweetness and patience of another; one would turn the Sick, the other help her up, the third dress her, the fourth feed her, and in all this, the sick Creature saw it, as it were the Face of the Lord *JESUS*. She that tended the Sick, look'd upon Christ in her that was sick, and she that was sick, thought she saw Christ, in the Person that tended her. So Divine, so heavenly were their Works of Mercy, that one was to the other in Gods stead, and that saying of *Christ*, *What you have done unto the least of these my Brethren, you have done it unto me*, depart not from their Memories. Thus stood the case with the Holy Women then, and this advantage they reapt by their Charitable care, that when their Husbands died, they were taken as Deaconesses into the Church, and thus they prepared themselves for Christ, and the Churches Service. If

If any were imprisoned upon the account of Religion , all that knew them would fly to them. No Keeper so hard-hearted , but they would find out a way to smooth him, no Lock, no Bar so strong, but they would make a shift to break it, either by their Gifts , or their soft Answers, not to make the Jaylers false to their Trusts , but to get an opportunity to see their Suffering Friends ; and when they saw them, one would kiss their Chains, and Fetters, another lay his Lips to their Wounds, a third give their bruised Members and tired Bodies such refreshment as was needful ; and as dismal as the Dungeon was , here they would discourse of Christ, sing Psalms , pray together , and their Pastors would come and Administer the Lords Supper to them, requiring no other Temple than that of a devout Heart , nor standing upon

upon the Ceremony of an Altar,  
but that of a wounded Spirit.

If any of them were driven into Exile, in every place they met with Brethren, and Fellow-Christians, and these would run to them, comfort them, lead them into their Houses, and treat them as Members of their own Family, especially when by Letters from their Brethren, they understood, that for *CHRIST* his sake they were driven from their native home.

Were any condemned to Work in Mines, or Quarries, the neighbouring Christians, that heard of it, would presently come together, help the innocent Man, endeavour to make his burthen light, feed him with Victuals, and assist him in the performing of his Task.

Were any of them sent through the malice of the Heathen Governors to the Correction-house, or

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forced to labour hard in Caves and Dens, or lamentably scourg'd, beaten, and abused for the name of the Lord *JESVS*. The rest that heard of it, would not complain, nor think their Brethren unhappy, but rather count themselves so, because they were not counted worthy to suffer for the Name of *JESVS*, and therefore would wish, that this might be their Lot and Portion too.

If the fury of Tyrants abated, or remitted at any time, and the imprison'd and afflicted Believers got leave to return home again, some wounded, some bruised, some with disjoynted Bones, some half Burnt, some Maimed, some with one Arm, some with one Eye, some with one Leg onely ; their Friends would run out to them, and strive, who should first receive them into their Houses. Happy the man that could kiss

kiss their Wounds; and refresh them with Necessaries and Conveniences, and the longer any Man could harbour such a Christian at his House, the happier he thought himself to be. And such Men as had thus suffer'd for Christ, they honour'd for the future, and esteemed them equal with their Pastors, and Presidents. Indeed out of these, they chose their Bishops, thinking those fittest to serve at *Christ's Altar* who had already made themselves a Sacrifice for him. Thus Men purchased the degree of Pastors by their Holiness, and their eminent Sanctity, which press'd even through Wounds, and Tortures for the Name of *Christ* prepared them for that Function. Men that were strong to suffer, they justly thought might be fittest to labour in God's Church, and they that had been such Champions for

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the truth, they looked upon as the properest Instruments to defend it to their death.

Nor did their kindness extend onely to their Friends, but reacht even to their greatest Enemies; and they that just before were persecuted by them, if their Persecutors fell sick, or were afflicted, or the Plague of God came upon them, these injured Christians would offer their Services, support them, comfort them, admonish them, attend at their Beds fide, and lend them their helping hand, cherish them, supple their Sores, relieve them, and with a pity great and magnanimous, weep over their calamitous Estate to the amazement of the Pagan World, who were now ready to look upon them as Angels, when but just before they thought them as bad as Devils.

Poverty was the least thing that troubled

troubled them, nor did Want sit so heavy on their Souls, as it doth on ours, for they had learned to undervalue Riches, and that which made them slight it, were these two impressions the Apostles Doctrine had made on their Souls.

1. This sunk deep into their Hearts, that here we have no Continuing City, but we seek one to come. That all we see here, is but shadow, and imagery, but the substance is not yet Visible; that the fashion of this World will pass away, and the Gaudes and Glories below the Moon afford no real satisfaction. This made it ridiculous in their eyes, to snatch at a Butterfly or a Flying Feather, and they rationally believed, that whatever is subject to time, and change, will certainly make it self Wings, and flee away, and leave the Soul as empty as it found it, and that

therefore their Thoughts must be turned another way, even there where constant satisfaction, lasting content, permanent happiness, perfect beauty, and uninterrupted joys are to be found ; and indeed, this duly weigh'd, will breed a mighty contempt of Temporal things, and a certain expectation of future Bliss.

2. Another thing that did no less contribute towards it, was their Belief, that the end of the World was at hand, and the Day of Judgment approaching. The time is short, cryed their Pastors, the Lord is coming, He will be upon you before you are aware ; to what purpose will ye treasure up Riches, Lands, Goods, Houses, which the Fire will shortly consume, and carry away ? Hence it was, that they lived every moment in expectation of the last day, and troubled not their

their heads with thinking how they should fill their Barns , and their Coffers, for they knew not, how long they should enjoy them ; and no marvel, if under these thoughts and circumstances, they freely parted with their worldly Goods, sold their Lands, and Houses, and bought no more, and brought what they had, and laid it down at the Apostles feet, that they might follow a Naked Saviour naked.

Nor did the care of their Children fill their Hearts with anxious Thoughts , for their were sensible, that whenever the Church had notice of their want , they would certainly be relieved , and looked after ; for as many Fathers and Mothers left their Estates , and what they had to the Church , so the Church employ'd those Legacies , or Gifts, to support all those that should be necessitous. Besides this,

their Pastors both by their Doctrine and Example admonish'd them to be diligent in working with their own hands, that they might get something not onely to be beneficial to themselves but to others too, and indeed they thought they did little or nothing, if of what they got, they did not communicate to those, who were not able to help themselves.

They had nothing, that was superfluous; and hence it was, that there was but little striving about what they left. To lay up much Goods for many years, they thought was fitter for Heathens than for Christians, and having seen no such thing in their Master, they could not tell, how it could be proper in his Servants.

They believed that it was their Pastors Office to take care of all, to maintain the Poor, and to distribute

stribute to all according to their several necessities ; for since God took that care upon him to feed the World, they thought, it would not be unbecoming his Ministers to do so too. This made them entrust at first the Apostles, and afterwards their Spiritual Pastors with what they could spare, to receive of them again, when they should stand in need. And now their Teachers did truly become their Fathers, and they acknowledged themselves to be their Children, and owning them for their Fathers, they gave them a Right to admonish them, to correct, to reprove them, to direct them, and to lead them to Perfection, and own'd a strong obligation at the same time to love, honour, reverence, and obey them.

And though the number of Christians was already prodigiously encreased, yet were not their numbers

bers troublesome to their Pastors, who loved to do good, and to spend themselves, and to be spent in that Service; Men who had no design, but to lay themselves out for God, and his Church, and with *Moses* were contented to be surrounded with people all day long, to discharge that Paternal care of their Souls, and Bodies, which they had undertaken. Nor were their Pastors therefore the Richer, because their Disciples brought what they had to them, for they that were to receive from them, were more, than those, who gave; and they took it in, only with a design to disperse it again among the Needy. Love of Money, and admiration of Riches, & anxious worldly Cares and Desires of Hoarding, were things they had an antipathy against, and though out of that Stock they provided themselves with Necessaries, yet for engrossing

grossing any thing to themselves, besides, was a thought as far from their Minds, as the Heaven they longed for was from that Earth, on which they trampled, and looked upon with pity and scorn; for, Alas! what greediness could there be in them after Temporal Means, who were already greater than the World could make them, and took delight in nothing, but surveying that Glory, which ere long they should rejoice, and triumph in?

So that they took the Peoples Money, without any danger of Covetousness. They were Men, that had fought for Christ, and left all to follow him; they were big with the Promises of the Gospel, and consequently with hopes of Everlasting Joys, had already tasted of the Powers of the World to come, and mock'd at Worldly-mindednes. They remembred that  
they

they were but Stewards for the Poor, and Nursing Fathers to Persons in distress, and Presidents of the Hospitals. Nor did their high-places make them uneasy in their Poverty, for they loved it, and made choice of it as a Companion, and a Friend. This made the People love them exceedingly, not because they took delight to see their Pastors poor, but because they saw, that they who had so much Money at their disposal, would make no use of it for their own interest; but were contentedly poor in that Plenty, and would want themselves rather than see others faint.

If any were so Malicious as to traduce their Teachers, and brand them with the guilt of Covetousness, or Slander them, their Pastors used no other Weapon to put by the Sting, but Meekness to the Backbiter, and their own in-

innocence by degrees dashed, and wiped away all aspersions. Hence the Christians gave them their own freely, for they believed they could loose nothing by it, and long experience had so confirm'd that belief, that Envy it self could make no impressions upon them to the contrary; when it was in their hands, they thought it was safer than in their own; and being hereby freed from abundance of Cares, and Incumbrances, they preferred more chearfully to the promised Mark.

If any Christian kept any land in his hands, his care was so to use his Income, as to give God the First Fruits of it, to bring his Gifts to the Church, to lay by somewhat for Alms, to help and assist the Sick, and to relieve prisoners and captives, not only such as were within the verge of the Town he liv'd in, but others also. Thus did those men live under riches,

as

as under Thorns, and were sensible of nothing so much as this, that great Wealth is but a great temptation to be Vain, and Sensual, which made them use this Self-denial in their Incomes.

He that for a kindness, he did to his Neighbour, expected a Recompence, was look'd upon, as a Person greedy of filthy Lucre; and he that could do nothing for his friend, without a Reward, or prospect of some Profit to himself, was censured like a Person ignorant of the Fundamental Law of their Religion. Usury, Interest, and such names, were scarce heard of among them; & oppression was a thing, which they thought none that named the Name of *Christ*, could be guilty of. In a word, they desired nothing so much in this world as to be quickly gone from it, and they thought it the joyfulllest news imaginable to understand, that they

they were to be dissolved, and to go to *Christ*.

This was the Temper, Nature, & Constitution of that Commonwealth. The Members of it look'd mean, and contemptible. Nothing about them was pompous, either in Cloaths, or Dyet, or Habitation, or Household-stuff. Such among them, as were Noble or Learned, or of a gentile Extract laid aside their Pride, and all their swelling Titles, forgot that they were better Born, or Educated than others, and became like their Brethren. Plaiting and Curling the Hair was a thing that both their Men and Women proscribed from their care, and they thought that labour lost, which was employ'd on such Superfluities. They were jealous of their serious frame of Spirit, and therefore all such Dresses, as might serve to infuse vanity into their Minds, or damp their zeal to Religion, they shunn'd,

shunn'd, as they did Houses infected with the Plague. They minded no such things as Modes and Fashions, nor did any new Habit , or Ornament that came up, entice them to imitation. Decency was their Rule, and Modesty the standard of their Habit, and Conversation. They wore nothing about them that was either Costly or Curious, and their greatest study and contrivance was, how to advance their Souls , and make them fit for the Wedding of the Lamb ; Laying on either White or Red upon the Face, or disfiguring it with something black, and of Kin to Hell , they knew not what it meant. Their Garments were either Linnen or Woollen,or Furr,or Sheeps-skin , and their Furniture Mean and Homely.

Without God , they attempted nothing, and whatever Enterprize it was , they betook themselves to,  
they

they sanctified it by Prayer, and Supplication. If they went out either to sow, or to Plough, or to Reap, or to Build, God's Blessing was first sought, and begg'd, and they never put on their Cloaths, but entertained themselves all the while with some holy reflections. Theaters and seeing of Plays they hated, as a thing contrary to their Profession ; and though the Heathen despised them for it, look'd upon them as unsociable, Men of pitiful Spirits, Strangers to the Art of Conversation, Melancholy Wretches, Brethren of Worms, and no better than Vermine of the Earth ; yet they mattered not their Censures, and triumph'd more in a good Conscience, than the other could do in all the Vanities and Glories of this present World. The Worlds Contempt, was their Glory, and they were proud of being Scorn'd and

Undervalued by the Vulgar Crowd, that they might with greater earnestness long after a better Inheritance. If any wanted busines, he would find some, and they that had no need to work for their Living, work'd for the Poor. Idleness they had an aversion from, as from the root of Evil, and great Men and Women would do something, which the Needy might be the better for. The greatest Lady would not disdain to Spin, or Sow, or Knit for her distressed Neighbour, and like Bees, they were ever busy, and employed for the common Good.

The love of the World was death to them, and they thought it a certain sign, that they had no Portion in *Christ*, if they should serve both God and Mammon. To be in the World, and not of the World was their *Motto*, and to be other

other Men, than they seemed to be, was the thing they chiefly aimed at. They seemed to be profane, because they would worship no Heathen Gods, but were the devoutest persons in the World to the true God, and they forgot to be Men, that they might be the better Christians. Not a few left their high Places, and great Dignities to become Christians, and chose to be low, and contemptible in the World, that they might have no impediments in their way to Heaven.

Servants never concern'd themselves to get their Freedom, for their Masters were Christians, and themselves were so ; both cheerfully discharged their Duties one to another, and consequently lived in perfect Peace, and Unity. Many Servants, that might have had their Freedom, would not, because they

lived sufficiently happy under their Believing Masters, and while they saw nothing but love in their Masters, their very Bondage was perfect Freedom.

Where a whole Family was Christian, they all did rise together, and at one and the same time, Pray'd and Read, and Sung Psalms, and observed one way and custom in their Devotions. If one Family had any thing to do more than ordinary, the Neighbouring Family would help them. If one was to Fast, his Neighbour Fasted with him ; If one was to pray for some signal Blessing, his Neighbour did pray with him ; if one wept, his Neighbour did weep with him ; if one mourned, his Neighbour mourned with him, as if both had committed the same Sin ; In a word, they had their Joys and Sorrows common, and they might

be

be said to be all in one, and one in all.

In their Meals they were temperate, so Abstinent, that our Fasts were but their ordinary way of Living ; and indeed one reason, why they were so holy at their Tables, was because for a long time either before, or after Meals they constantly received the *Eucharist*. And in such Meetings they made love one to another, made their Friendship inviolable, for they Seal'd it with the Bloud of *JESUS*. These were true Love-Feasts, and they were managed with that Gravity, Chastity, and Modesty, and Singing of Psalms, that the World might see, it was a preparation for a greater Supper.

Their Houses were open to Strangers, as well as to their Friends and Neighbours ; and where the Traveller could produce a Certifi-

cate, that he was a practical Christian, he could not fail of a most hearty Welcome. Hospitality was their Badge, and he that would not receive a Brother into his House, because Poor, and Ragged, was either forbid the Church, or not suffer'd to come into it.

Their Pastors and Rulers obliged them to certain Fasts, but besides those, of their own accord they chastned themselves very frequently. In their Fasts, they were exceeding strict, and they so emaciated their Bodies by these rigors, that their Faintness, Weariness, and Sackcloth and Ashes seem'd to force Heaven to Pity and Compassion. In short, whatever was Voluptuous, they hated, and looked upon, as unsuitable to the Crucified JESUS, and so improper for that perfect Wisdom, they aimed at, that they proscribed it as an Enemy, and shun-

shunned it like the rankest Poison, and admitted no more of it but what was just necessary, for the support of that Life, the Great Creator had given them to spend to his Glory.

And though they never had studied *Pythagoras*, yet both their Faith and Reason told them that as the Body waxes stronger by the death of the Soul, so the Soul becomes more valiant, and lively by the death of the Body. This made them Conquerours of those Pleasures of the Flesh, which in all Ages have weakned the bravest Men into Women, melted Hearts of Iron, and conquered the greatest Conquerours of the World.

To suppress such satisfactions of the Flesh, they were so watchful, so courageous, so magnanimous, that they seemed Angels Men, and were actu-

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God, to whom they lived, than to the World, in which they lived. In their Lives Chaste and Modest; in their Married estate Moderate, and Holy, and not a Man came near his Wife, after he perceived, or had notice that she was with Child, till she was deliver'd, and even then when they came together their thoughts were so innocent, that they proposed no other end but Procreation of Children to be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord. In the very Works of their Calling, they would sing of *Christ*, and converse with Spiritual Objects, even in their Sleep and Dreams, and consequently were always ready for Prayer, and holy Ejaculations; so addicted to the love of Goodness, that they could not endure a vicious Person; and if they met with any such in their Assemblies, did  
thrust

thrust him out from their Communion, and made it Criminal for any Christian either to Eat, or Drink, or Converse, or Talk, or keep Company with him.

They took particular notice of him, who taught any thing contrary to the Doctrine of their Pastors, and no Plague sore was shunn'd more, than a new up-start Principle. If they heard any thing contrary to the Faith deliver'd to the Saiuts, they either stopt their Ears, or made haste to be gone from the place, the dangerous Tenet was publish'd in. New Fangles were that which their Teachers seriously warned them against, and the great Character of Heresie was, that the Doctrine was New, and unknown to the Apostles. To continue this Purity of Doctrine in their Church, their custom was, to read the Scripture, and to hear it

ex-

explain'd by their Pastors in publick Congregations ; and though they read it at home, yet they were fearful to explain any thing , but what they had heard their Pastors explain in publick before , and according to their Expositions, they understood those Oracles.

It was a very common thing in those days, both for Laymen and Clergymen to learn the Bible without Book, and many of them had the Word so ready, that nothing could befall them, but they had a plaister or medicine ready from that inexhaustible Treasury. From hence their Souls got more than ordinary strength and nourishment, and their minds receiv'd that vivacity and quickness, that it gave life even to their bodies, starved almost through watching, fasting, and other voluntary penalties.

Of

Of their Teachers they were so observant, that without them they would begin nothing, and go nowhere without their Letters of Recommendation. Without their advice, they would not marry, nor do any thing considerable in their civil affairs without asking their counsel and approbation, for they looked upon them as their Fathers, and as Religion had made them so, so they thought the obligation to consult them upon all occasions was the stronger. These they received into their houses, as the Saints of old did Angels with joy, and trembling, and whenever they met them, though upon the road, or in the streets, they would fall down and kiss their feet, and refuse to rise, till they had given them their blessing and benediction; to which blessing they said *Amen*, and rose again, and so parted with a kiss.

They

They thought it no small happiness to lodge their Pastors at their houses ; for when they had them, they believed they had got some good Spirit in their houses, and with them they pray'd, and hop'd, that now their Prayers could not miscarry, when joyned with the Incense of those, who had so often moved God to be merciful to a whole Congregation. For this reason, they were desirous to entertain Pious men in general to do them good, and to relieve them, as they did their Domesticks, for they thought the presence of such men a Blessing to their Families, and a Protection from innumerable Evils, that might otherwise befall them.

From the Unity and Peaceableness of their Teachers it was, that the Christians then, though very numerous, continued unanimous in

in the Primitive Doctrine, and Discipline, and though the several Assemblies might differ in Rites and Ceremonies, yet the mighty love they bore one to another, constrain'd them to over-look those differences; and though they varied in some outward Acts of Worship, yet their Affections, were so strongly glewed together, that nothing but death could break the League or Amity.

If one Neighbour chanced to quarrel with another, and they broke forth into Contention, and Enmity, they were so long excluded from the Prayers of the Assembly, till they had cordially reconciled themselves one to the other. This punishment was then thought great and grievous, and men were so uneasy under these Excommunications, that the fear  
of

of them kept them from Animosities, and rather than undergo such Censures, would suffer themselves to be defrauded, and when they were beaten, would not beat again, when reviled, would not revile again ; and when abused, would not abuse again, nay look upon an unjust Calumny as a piece of Martyrdom, and therefore bear it undauntedly. Those that knew themselves guilty of a great Sin, durst not appear in the publick ; and they that were fallen into any notorious Errours, durst not so much profane the Prayers of the Church , as to appear there with the rest of the Assembly. So great was the dread of Gods Majesty in those days, that even a desperate Offendor was afraid of taking Gods Covenant in his Mouth, while he hated to be reformed.

Their meeting or coming together

ther to Pray they esteemed a thing so Sacred, that no Frowns, no Thunders, no Threatnings of Tyrants could make them forbear; and being Conscious of their innocence, they justly thought, their enemies might by their Authority forbid, but could not with any colour of Reason prohibit their Assemblies. This made them flock to their Oratories, though it was death to go; and Parents with their Children would run, though the next news, they were like to hear was, *Christianos ad Leones, Throw those Dogs to the Lions.* Though they were thrust into Mines, and Prisons, yet they would find opportunities to Pray, and Celebrate the Communion together; for some of their Brethren, that knew of their distress, flocked to them; and the first thing they did together, was laying force

force on Heaven with their Tears and Prayers ; for indeed, it was death to them not to join with their Fellow - Christians in Supplications, and strong Cries ; for though they were very diligent in this Duty in their private Houses, yet they took no Prayers to be so weighty or prevalent, as those, that were offer'd up in company.

The days they appointed for publick Prayer, were the Lords Day, the Anniversaries of their Martyrs, and Wednesday and Friday every week, on which two days they had their stations, fasted and humbled themselves before Almighty God ; besides their Vigils at night, which they thought sinful to spend without Prayer, and Celebrations of Gods Goodness, and Holiness. Strange was their longing for the House of God

God , and the thirsty Earth can-  
not gape for Rain and Water  
more, than they panted after their  
going with the Pious Multitude to  
their Oratories ; which made *Dio-  
nysius Alexandrinus* , when driven  
into Exile , and used very coarsly  
by the Soldiers that had the charge  
of him, complain in a Letter to his  
Friend how near it went to him to  
be deprived of those opportunities  
of meeting his Brethren on the usu-  
al Festivals ; and this he professes  
was infinitely more troublesome to  
him , than to be chased from his  
Native home , or live upon Bread,  
and Water , or to lie on the cold  
Ground, or to endure other incon-  
veniences .

In their publick Assemblies, even  
little Children, that had been Bapti-  
zed , would come , and appear a-  
mong the graver sort , and beg of  
their Pastors to offer up their Pray-

ers for their advancement in the ways of Holiness, and give themselves up to their Direction, and Government. So fervent were all sorts of people among them; and they seemed ambitious of nothing so much, as of exceeding one another in strictness, and watchfulness.

That they used the Sign of the Cross much, cannot be denied. Indeed they made no Crosses of Gold, or Silver, but would cross their Breasts, and Foreheads, as a Badge of their Profession; and whether they were going or standing, or when they met one another, or were to sit down at Table, or to take their rest, even in the Streets, and Market-places, they would sign themselves with this Sign, and without this they scarce undertook any thing, the rather, because it distinguished them from the Heathens,

thens, and was a Testimony of their joy, that they were counted worthy to suffer reproach for the Name of their Crucified Redeemer.

It is almost incredible, what cost they bestowed upon the Burials of their deceased Friends ; and they were so resolute in it, that though their Enemies both envied, and reviled, and sometimes punish'd them for it, yet they went on, and look'd upon't as sinful to neglect those Bodies, when dead, which in their life-time had been Temples of the Holy Ghost. The care they took to embalm them was such, that the *Arabs* professed they got more Money for their Perfumes of the poor *Christians*, than of the richer *Pagans*, who yet were never without Incense in their Idol - Temples. Such Pains and Cost did they bestow in performing the Exequies of Gods Servants ; and though

M m 2                   they

they had little in the World , yet what they had they were very free of , on such occasions , for they looked upon such Mens Funerals as Prologues to their Eternal rest , and this Cost was an Emblem, how much God valued those Saints that died in the Lord , and how richly he would crown them, when they had run their Race with Patience.

To their Princes, and Magistrates they were ever very submissive, and in all lawful things obedient to a tittle. In their Prayers they always remembred them, and though they persecuted and afflicted them, yet that did not abate their Zeal, and Vows for their welfare and prosperity. Rebellion against their Governours they hated, as Witchcraft, and ever thought it safer to suffer, than to resist. Hence they paid Tribute without murmuring ; for

for their opinion was, that no Man could have that power , except it were given him from above. His Tyranny could not make them neglect their Duty, nor his ill Government tempt them to forget their Allegiance ; where the Man was rough and hard-hearted , that was over them , they look'd upon the Providence as a Means to trie their Faith, and even then , when they might have resisted and conquer'd, they would not , because they thought it was unsuitable to their Religion.

This was to be a Christian ; a thing outwardly corruptible, yet at the same time , with the hand of Faith grasping Heaven, and the immense Glory of Paradice, and labou-ring day and night , that he might have something to give to Gods Ministers , to the Poor, and to his own Family.

*A Letter to a*

Not a few of them renounced the satisfactions of Matrimony, lived single, forsook all, retired into Desarts, buried themselves in poor Cottages, studied the Scriptures, Contemplated Heaven, and lived to God.

Some travelled into far Countries, Preach'd the Gospel, and when they had laid a good Foundation there, went farther, and spent their Lives in Pains and Labours, and doing good.

Thousands of their Virgins freely and voluntarily dedicated themselves to God, and would be married to none but him; and though many times they were tempted by rich Fortunes, and Offers of great consequence, yet nothing could alter their Resolutions of continuing Virgins, and so they lived, and so they died, as they lived to Christ, so they died in him; Their Zeal

was

was great ; and even then , when Christianity began to decay , their Lights did so shine , and burn , that they were enough to have revived it again into its former Glory , if men would but have set their Examples before them , and afforded them any serious consideration .

It's true , even among these Christians in the purest Ages , there were divers , that by their Lives disgraced that noble Religion . But these were chastized with very severe Discipline , and as long as they were in a state of Sin , were not looked upon as Christians ; nor did any Christian converse with them . If they repented , they were forced to make their repentance publick , and for some years together , were forced to give such demonstration of it , that the Devil himself could not but acknowledge the sincerity

of it. By Weeping and Prostrating themselves before Gods people, and imploring the assistance of Believers, and a hundred such austeries, they sought to be reconciled to God, and to his Church, which made the Fathers say, That the Penitent were no Scandal, but an Ornament of the Church: They were in a manner a distinct Church, and the way to get among the true Believers, was now harder than at their first embracing of Christianity; yet these Penitent might truly say of themselves as the  
*Cant. i. 5.* Spouse in the *Canticles*, *I am black, but comely, O ye Daughters of Jern-*  
*lem.*

With this kind of Life, the first Christians amazed the unbelieving World, and their Power and Number quickly grew so formidable, that the Emperours themselves began to be startled at their progress,  
and

and therefore employ'd their Might and Greatness to oppose it. To chrush their towering Piety , the Heathens shewed them Racks , Flames, Gibbets, Grid-irons, Cauldrons, boyling Oyl, Lions, Bears, Wild Bulls, and set before them the Worldly Prudence of Philosophers, but by the Grace and Assistance of that *JESVS*, who strengthned them , they were more undaunted at their Torments , than their Hangmen , did fight with Lions , and smile , and were more daring than the Flames they suffer'd in , firmer than the Racks , that broke their Bones , and by their practises surmounted all the great Acts that were ever done by Hero's , and the most famous Conquerours. They overcame Death by a desire of Death, and were more willing to die , than their Executioners to suffer

suffer them. Their Blood proved the Seed of the Church; and the more they Massacred, the more their numbers grew, till all the Emperors themselves became Christians, and were forced to yield to the Faith, and Patience of *JESUS*, and the Christians at last gave Law to those, who at first did Stab, and Murder them, and Conquer'd them in the end, who in the beginning Butcher'd them like Dogs, and such inconsiderable Animals.

And now, Sir, it's very likely that some, who may chance to read these Lines, will look upon the Account, I have given you, as a Spiritual Romance, an Emblem rather of what Men might be, were they in a more perfect State, than of what they generally were.

But

But they that shall pass this Censure on the Premises, do but betray their ignorance , and I can onely send them to the Writers in those Ages, when Christianity was decked and adorned with these Jewels , and quoted by my Author , such as *Ignatius Polycarp* , *Justin Martyr* , *Irenæus* , *Athenagoras* , *Minutius Felix* , *Tertullian* , *Clemens Alexandrinus* , *Origen* , *Cyprian* , and others that succeeded them ; and if people , to favour their Lusts will neither believe , nor take pains to search into the truth of Things , all that can be said , is , that they are resolute in their Infidelity.

SIR , I am perswaded you have chosen the better part , and as I do not question your Belief of these passages , so that these Saints may be

*A Letter, &c.*

be your Pattern, and their Actions  
the great Rule of your Life, and  
the Spirit of God your Guide in  
these ways of Holiness, is the hearty  
Wish and Prayer of,

SIR,

Your Affectionate Friend,  
and Servant,

*Anthony Horneck.*

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